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ABSTRACT

This partial proceedings contains papers presented at the fifth annual conference of the Assembly for the Teaching of English Grammar on the topic of learning, teaching, and researching grammar. Papers in the proceedings are: "Using Grammatical Information to Make Rhetorical Points (Wanda Van Goor); "Grammar with a Purpose: Using Grammar to Teach Style to College Freshmen" (Paula Foster and Summer Smith); "Punctuation and Grammar: Driving Forces in Composition" (Debra Laaker Burgauer); "The Uneasy Partnership between Grammar and Writing Instruction" (Robert Funk); "The Philosophical Roots of Traditional English Grammar" (Robert Einarsson); "After Jesperson: Nexus and Modification" (Ed Vavra); "Whose Judgments?: A Survey of Faculty Responses to Common and Highly Irritating Writing Errors" (Margaret Kantz and Robert Yates); "Handbooks and Variation in Agreement" (Terry Lynn Irons); "Unabashed Notes on the 'G-Word': Grammar in the Classroom" (John Horlivy); "The Role of Grammar in the Teaching of Writing to ESL College Students" (Ru Zhang); "A Case for Grammar in a Multicultural College Writing Classroom" (Immaculate Kizza); "Improving Grammar and Other Writing Skills with Text Reconstruction (TR)" (Myra Linden); and "On Grammar, Writing Style and Writing Assessment: A Look at the Grammatical Choices Made within Standardized and Computer Adaptive Testing" (Daniel Kies). (RS)

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Proceedings
of the

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Using Grammatical Information to Make Rhetorical Points

-- Wanda Van Goor
Prince George's Community College
Largo, MD

ABSTRACT

Theory: Once students can identify main (independent) clauses and main ideas, a simple graphic system will demonstrate whether their sentences are strong and unified. The student underlines the main clause of a sentence and circles the main idea. In a strong, unified sentence, the circle will sit on the line. If the circle does not sit on the line, the writer should consider revising the sentence so that its main idea is in its main clause.

Practice: The presentation includes a variety of exercises (with answer keys) to explain and reinforce the concept, including one in which an identical set of sentences yields two paragraphs that make quite different points.

MIMC? AN (ALMOST) INFALLIBLE TEST FOR SENTENCE UNITY IN A PARAGRAPH

Step 1: Distinguish between phrases and clauses.
Step 2: Distinguish between independent and dependent clauses.
Step 3: Underline the independent clause(s) of the sentence.
Step 4: Circle the main idea(s) in the sentence.
Step 5: Ask: Is each circle sitting on a line?

Yes? The sentence has sentence unity.

No? Rewrite the sentence so that the circle(s) will sit on the line(s) -- the main idea(s) will then be in the main clause(s), and there will usually be only one main clause.

MIMC? = IS THE MAIN IDEA IN THE MAIN CLAUSE?

MAIN IDEA: The main idea is the idea you want to emphasize in your sentence. In a paragraph, it should match the controlling idea of your topic sentence.

MAIN CLAUSE: The main clause is the independent clause of the sentence.

If you underline the main clause and draw a circle around the main idea, you'll be able to see whether or not your sentence is unified.

If the circle is sitting on the line, you have the main idea inside the main clause.
If the circle is not sitting on the line, you need to reconsider the sentence.

Look at EXERCISE ONE on the page to the right.

First, circle the main idea in the topic sentence.
Next, underline the main clause in (a) and (b) .
Next, circle in (a) and (b) the idea that matches the idea you circled in the topic sentence.
Now check the answer key at the bottom of the next page to be sure you did all this correctly.
Then check to see which sentence has a circle sitting on top of the line. THAT is the sentence you want.

Don't bury your main idea in a phrase, even if the phrase is a part of main clause. Look at EXERCISE TWO on the page to the right.

Underline the main clauses; circle the controlling ideas. (For both, you'll underline the entire sentence. For (a), you'll circle "by its cleanliness"; for B, "Its cleanliness.")
Both sentences have the circle on the line, but which sentence makes "cleanliness" stand out?

EXERCISE ONE

Which of the support sentences below fits better with the topic sentence?

TOPIC SENTENCE: Even though Mom cooked in it all day long and fed our whole family there three times a day, her kitchen always looked clean.

SUPPORT SENTENCES:
(a) All of the counter tops, which were made of white formica, sparkled when the sunlight hit them.
(b) All of the counter tops, which sparkled when the sunlight hit them, were made of formica.

EXERCISE TWO

TOPIC SENTENCE:
(a) I was always surprised by its cleanliness.
(b) Its cleanliness always surprised me.

-----ANSWER KEY-----

[Editor's Note: Items which were circled in the answer keys are here presented in bold type.]

EXERCISE ONE:

Even though Mom cooked in it all day long and fed our whole family there three times a day, **her kitchen always looked clean**.
(a) **All of the counter tops**, which were made of white formica, **sparkled** when the sunlight hit them.
(b) All of the counter tops, **which sparkled** when the sunlight hit them, were made of formica.

EXERCISE TWO:

Sure, (b) does. In (a), "I was always surprised" can stand alone; the "cleanliness" idea gets buried.

MIMC? SAN FRANCISCO EXERCISE

Outlined below is a paragraph about San Francisco. The topic sentence and major supports are fine. You need to add some details, some minor supports.

From the minor supports listed, choose DETAILS that fit the controlling idea of the topic sentence and the major. (Feel free to underline the main clause and circle the main idea--doing so will help you decide which sentence(s) to use.)

TOPIC SENTENCE:

After only one morning of sight seeing there, we had one overwhelming impression:
San Francisco is a very noisy place.

MAJOR SUPPORT #1:

I first noticed the noise while we were waiting for the cable car.

MINOR SUPPORTS: (Choose three):

(a) Standing in a crowd of excited tourists, we had to shout to make ourselves heard.
(b) The tourists, babbling loudly in several languages, waited patiently in line.
(c) The tourists, waiting patiently in line, babbled loudly in several languages.
(d) Street vendors shouted and sang to attract our attention.
(e) Street vendors attracted our attention by shouting and singing.

MAJOR SUPPORT #2:

The arrival of the cable car added several decibels of sound.

MINOR SUPPORTS (Choose the two best ones):

(f) Clanging its bell and sporting many fluttering flags, the empty cable car approached.
(g) The empty cable car that approached us, its bright flags fluttering,
clanged its bell every few seconds.
(h) The harsh grinding of its brakes, which drowned out the babbling, had a metallic sound.
(i) The harsh, metallic grinding of its brakes drowned out the babbling.
(j) Deafened by the car's noise, we hardly noticed how crowded we were.

MAJOR SUPPORT #3:

As the car, filled to capacity, clattered down the hill, we were surrounded by a cacophony of sound.

MINOR SUPPORTS (Choose three):

(k) Local residents, who whistled and called to us cheerfully, welcomed us to their town.
(l) Local residents, who welcomed us to their town, whistled and called their greetings.
(m) The cable car driver, whose hands were busy with levers and chains,
still sounded his bell to acknowledge each greeting.
(n) The cable car driver, who acknowledged their greetings with a variety of bell sounds,
kept busy with the car's levers and chains.
(o) The car itself rattled and scraped as its chains and pulleys kept its speed under control.
(p) As the car's chains and pulleys rattled and scraped, they managed
to keep the car under control.

CONCLUSION: When we screeched to a halt at Fisherman's Wharf,
I set out to make my first serious San Francisco purchase -- earplugs!

ANSWER KEY

If you chose a, c, d; g, i; and l, m, o, your paragraph will have unified sentences. It will look like this:

After only one morning of sight seeing there, we had one overwhelming impression: San Francisco is a very noisy place. I first noticed the noise while we were waiting for the cable car. Standing in a crowd of excited tourists, we had to shout to make ourselves heard. The tourists, waiting patiently in line, babbled loudly in several languages. Street vendors shouted and sang to attract our attention. The arrival of the cable car added several decibels of sound. The empty cable car that approached us, its bright flags fluttering, clanged its bell every few seconds. The harsh, metallic grinding of its brakes drowned out the babbling of the tourists. As the car, filled to capacity, clattered down the hill, we were surrounded by a cacophony of sound. Local residents, who welcomed us to their town, whistled and called their greetings. The cable car driver, whose hands were busy with levers and chains, still sounded the bell to acknowledge each greeting. The car itself rattled and scraped as its chains and pulleys kept its speed under control. When we screeched to a halt at Fisherman's Wharf, I set out to make my first serious San Francisco purchase -- ear plugs!

MIMC: One Set of Sentences Yields Two Paragraphs

Below are two topic sentences and seven compound sentences. Work with a partner, each taking a different topic sentence.

Then rewrite each compound sentence so that (1) it has only one main clause and (2) the idea that matches the controlling idea of your topic sentence is in that main clause. Put everything else in a dependent clause or a phrase.

You and your partner will produce two different paragraphs, each unified and developed. The first sentence has been done for you.

TOPIC SENTENCES:

A. In spite of her many problems, Alicia won the contest for Prom Queen.
B. Alicia, who won the contest for Prom Queen, had to overcome many problems.

SUPPORTING SENTENCES:

1. Her boyfriend, Ralph, had lots of influence as the captain of the football team, and he almost missed the deadline for nominating her.
2. All of his teammates promised to vote for Alicia, and most of them did; but some of them never got around to voting at all.
3. The basketball players originally supported one of Alicia's rivals; they eventually gave their votes to Alicia.
4. Alicia had trouble raising enough money for her campaign, so her sorority sisters came to her rescue.
5. Trudy was Alicia's campaign manager, and she did a terrific job; however, she came down with the flu halfway through the campaign.
6. The ballots were counted and re-counted; they clearly gave Alicia the title of Prom Queen.
7. Alicia experienced many trying times, and she finally became the new Queen.

A. In spite of many problems, Alicia won the contest for Prom Queen. (1) *Her boyfriend Ralph, who almost missed the deadline for nominating her, had lots of influence as captain of the football team.*

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

(5) _____

(6) _____

(7) _____

B: Alicia, who won the contest for Prom Queen, had to overcome many problems. (1) *Her boyfriend, Ralph, who had lost of influence as captain of the football team, almost missed the deadline for nominating her.*

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

(5) _____

(6) _____

(7) _____

ANSWER KEY

(NOTE: The paragraphs below are not finished! They still need some transitions and final editing, but all of the sentences are unified and support the controlling idea of the topic sentence.)

A. In spite of her many problems, Alicia won the contest for prom queen. Her boyfriend, Ralph, who almost missed the deadline for nominating her, had lots of influence as captain of the football team. All of his teammates promised to vote for her, and most of them did, although some of them never got around to voting at all. The basketball players, who originally supported one of Alicia's rivals, eventually gave Alicia their votes. When Alicia had trouble raising enough money for her campaign, her sorority sisters came to her rescue. Although Trudy, her campaign manager, came down with the flu halfway through campaign, she did a terrific job. The ballots, counted and recounted, clearly gave Alicia the title. After experiencing many trying times, Alicia became the new Prom Queen.

B. Alicia, who won the contest for Prom Queen, had to overcome many problems. Her boyfriend, Ralph, who had lots of influence as captain of the football team, almost missed the deadline for nominating her. Although all his teammates promised to vote for her, and most of them did, some of them never got around to voting at

all. The basketball players, who eventually gave Alicia their votes, originally supported one of her rivals. Until her sorority sisters came to her rescue, Alicia had trouble raising enough money for her campaign. Trudy, who did a terrific job as campaign manager, came down with the flu halfway through the campaign. The ballots, clearly giving Alicia the title, had to be counted and re-counted. Before becoming the new Prom Queen, Alicia experienced many trying times.

MIMC: Editing a Paragraph for Sentence Unity*

Some sentences in the following paragraph are not unified. Revise the paragraph, including the topic and clinching sentences, so that Michelangelo's hardships in painting the chapel ceiling are stressed. Do not discard any sentence completely.

Despite the many hardships that he encountered, Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Pope Julius II, a major source of difficulty, commissioned the work. He was impatient for the chapel to be finished, and he kept urging Michelangelo to work faster. He was not so willing to finance the project, and the artist often had to beg his patron for additional funds. Bramante was the Pope's chief architect, and he was a more serious problem. He was, in fact, Michelangelo's bitter enemy, and he often carried gossip to the Pope or suggested that the painting be abandoned. The artist's own family hindered his progress. He had a father and four brothers who continually wrote him letters asking for money. They took up his time with their quarrels. Assistants who would cooperate with him were something that Michelangelo could not find. His work was delayed many times because his helpers could not follow his directions. There were many technical problems that arose, and he was forced to solve most of them himself. As you can see, Michelangelo's life was difficult in many ways.

* My notes as to the origin of this paragraph have been lost; it probably came from an early edition of John Ostrom's Better Paragraphs.

ONE ACCEPTABLE REVISION OF THE MICHELANGELO PARAGRAPH

(NOTE: The paragraph below is not finished. It still needs some transitions and final editing, but all of the sentences are unified and support the controlling idea of the topic sentence.)

Michelangelo encountered many hardships while painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Pope Julius II, who commissioned the work, was a major source of difficulty. Impatient for the chapel to be finished, he kept urging Michelangelo to work faster. Since he was not so willing to finance the project, the artist often had to beg his patron for additional funds. Bramante, the Pope's chief architect, was a more serious problem. Michelangelo's bitter enemy, who often carried gossip to the Pope, Bramante suggested that the painting be abandoned. The artist's own family hindered his progress. His father and four brothers continually asked him for money in their letters. They took up his time with their quarrels. Michelangelo could not find cooperative assistants. His work was delayed many times because his helpers could not follow his directions. He was forced to solve most of the technical problems that arose himself. As you can see, painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel was difficult for Michelangelo in many ways.

Grammar with a Purpose: Using Grammar to Teach Style to College Freshmen

-- Paula Foster, California State University, Northridge
-- Summer Smith, Pennsylvania State University

When Summer and I began to teach Freshman Composition at our separate universities, we made a discovery that many teachers have made before us: our students need extensive instruction in style. We define "style" for the purposes of this discussion as a writer's ability to make effective selections from a wide range of syntactic options. Though we teach vastly different populations, we observe in tandem that sentences seem to emerge from students' heads in tickertape fashion, a single staccato ribbon of words which they capture on paper. It seldom occurs to them that a given idea can be expressed in more than just the first way it happens to come out. Hence, on a certain level, they are essentially powerless, at the mercy of habit.

Despite the current anti-grammar climate within the profession, both Summer and I have come to believe that unless grammar is treated in Freshman Comp, students will continue to take this powerless stance towards their writing. Unless they are made aware of the many grammatical constructions available to them, and more importantly, unless they learn that they can consciously choose and re-choose as they write and revise, no amount of other instruction can bring them to full agency as makers of meaning.

Because we are different people teaching in different situations, we naturally tackle this problem in different ways. But both of us have successfully incorporated non-traditional grammar instruction into our curricula. We agree with Roland Harris' 1963 conclusion that traditional grammar instruction (i.e. parsing sentences; see Kolln 1984) does not improve student writing--but we argue that non-traditional grammar instruction, aimed at having students produce and manipulate their own sentences, can increase their syntactic fluency and ultimately help them come to see language not as an uncontrollable mystery, but as a flexible medium of communication over which they can exert far more control than they had previously believed.

It is important to give you a clear picture of the two populations we teach, because we see them falling on two different points of what can be seen as a spectrum of grammatical savvy--mine towards the low end, hers closer to the high end. Summer teaches at Pennsylvania State University at University Park, PA, where the average high school GPA of the approximately thirty thousand students is 3.45, the average verbal SAT is 506, and most students are native speakers of English from largely Anglo-European cultures. Most of her students are familiar with the basic rules of Standard English grammar, and because of their relatively high skill level, Summer is able to move her students more quickly to higher levels of syntactic choicemaking.

I, on the other hand, teach at California State University, Northridge, located in an ethnically diverse suburb of Los Angeles. The approximately twenty thousand undergraduates have an average high school GPA of 2.9 and relatively low SATs. Almost half are ethnic "minorities," a term that is nearly outdated, and an estimated forty percent are non-native speakers of Standard English. Over eighty percent of this year's incoming freshmen will be placed in developmental English classes. In my classroom, you may find representatives from many non-European countries, and, of course, plenty of students from areas of L.A. that are culturally and linguistically distant from Standard English discourse. Therefore, my students are, on the whole, grammatical and stylistic beginners with Standard English compared to Summer's: I deal with subject-verb agreement, pronoun reference and sentence recognition on a daily basis.

In this short presentation, then, we will outline our attempts to teach style through nontraditional grammar instruction. First, I will present my approach, which uses three basic sentence patterns to

enable relatively naive freshmen to recognize sentence forms in Standard English and get their first taste of syntactic flexibility; then, since Summer cannot attend this conference, I will also present her approach, which uses the concepts of modification, subordination and coordination to teach more skilled freshmen to add specifics to their writing and to vary their sentence structures. (We realize that good writing involves much more than just syntactic fluency, but in this presentation we are focusing on sentence-level concerns.)

My grammar pedagogy is driven by two principles:

1) My goal is to empower students as writers, not as linguists. Therefore,
2) grammatical terminology should in most cases be introduced only after the students have discovered or approximated the structures in question--because the terms are then truly necessary to describe what was just written and distinguish it from the other construction that was written yesterday.

Thus, the two things students hate most about traditional grammar, its apparent pointlessness and its lexical density, are reduced to an absolute minimum. One can tell them cheerfully and quite truthfully on the first day of class that they will never have to diagram a sentence again. Cheers all around. But their real grammar instruction begins right away, before the euphoria dies down, in a series of lessons that are a great deal more grammatically based than most students realize. While the lessons can be done one right after the other, it may be best to space them one or two class meetings apart, as an additional safeguard against overload and burnout.

In the first lesson, I project a slide onto a screen and ask everyone in the room to write one sentence describing what they see, which I do as well. The slide I use happens to show the interior of Grand Central Station with its high arched windows, giant billboards, floor teeming with commuters, and a big, brilliant ray of sunlight slicing diagonally downwards onto a glass phone booth. After three or four minutes, I ask for a brave volunteer to read his or her sentence aloud: if it's complete, which it usually is, I praise it, write it on the board and ask, "Now, what is this sentence about?" The class identifies the subject: in this case, the ray of sunlight. Then I ask, "What is being said about the ray of sunlight?" They answer, according to the sentence, that it is slanting onto the heads of the crowd. Fine. Now I can explain that the subject is what the sentence is "about," and the predicate is what is being said about that subject. Since most of them think, naively, that the subject is whatever happens to come first and the predicate is simply the rest of the verbiage, so to speak, this represents a shift from a shallow, inadequate surface understanding to a deeper, more useful pragmatic understanding, along the lines of "topic" and "comment" (see Van Dijk). It is crucially important at this early juncture to steer them assertively towards the purpose behind writing or speaking a sentence at all: to make some statement (predicate) about some thing (subject). When I am sure that they completely understand this, only then do I attach the labels "noun phrase" and "verb phrase" and point out that these are two pivotal constituents of all English sentences (again speaking functionally, not structurally).

Having established that in the first lesson, I tell them in the second that there are basically three kinds of verbs: intransitive, transitive, and linking. The point of this is solely to introduce three basic sentence patterns, which I immediately draw on the board, like this:

[Editor's note: No diagram was supplied.]

This is, ideally, the only time that I will introduce grammatical terminology before they produce the construct, and I do so simply because getting them to discover and describe different varieties of verbs on their own would require spending multiple class periods in close linguistic analysis, which goes against my whole approach: they need to generate new strings, not endlessly analyze old ones. I realize also that those three verb categories are a bit too simple, but refinements will enter the picture later as they make discoveries through their own writing.

Until now I have been following an instructional sequence Martha Kolln advocates in her 1991 book Rhetorical Grammar, though to be honest, I did not

know that until recently. And here is where my pedagogy diverges from hers: she starts off with seven sentence patterns, which is certainly more technically accurate. But remember my particular population. My goal is to involve these students in language production without overwhelming them with metalanguage. So I reduce Kolln's seven patterns to three: subject-intransitive verb, subject-transitive verb-object, and subject-linking verb-complement. I tell them that each "kind" of sentence is distinguished by what kind of verb drives it. Then I explain the three verbs functionally: for example, I tell them that a linking verb is like an "equals" sign, for when you want to equate one thing with another. (I diverge from Kolln again by including "to be" verbs under linking verbs.)

Now we start writing, without a slide this time: I ask them to produce simple, obvious examples of each sentence pattern. They might come up with statements like "Maria bailed," "Carlos likes to party" and "College is scary," but for now, that's absolutely fine. The silliness actually helps: it lightens up the atmosphere and boosts their confidence that they can indeed produce each of these patterns. The key is to make sure they understand, at least intuitively, as reflected by their examples, that different sentence patterns require different information to be complete. But I keep the focus on content rather than the linguistic forms that content can take. They don't need to know that a complement can be anything from an adverbial prepositional phrase to a noun phrase to an adjective; they do need to know that when you say a subject "is" or "seems like" or "tastes like" something, we need to know what that "something" is. Simple enough, and logical enough, for them to understand instinctively. Later in this second lesson, I ask them to make a yes/no question out of their sentences, invoking the question rule as a checker. Most of them pick that up easily, jumping to check their own and each other's sentences. That ends the second lesson.

In the third lesson (or maybe, for you, the second or the fourth, depending on your population), we get away from "Dick and Jane" prose into the concept of modification, which word I do not initially use. I merely ask, what is the difference between the simple little sentences we wrote last time, and most of the sentences you run across when you read? Seizing upon the obvious, they say, "the ones we read are longer." Fine. Now why are they longer? When someone observes correctly that there is more information in them, I say, "Excellent!" and draw the three patterns again on the board, with a difference -- this time I draw little circles or blobs in between the elements, like this:

[Editor's note: No diagram was included.]

I tell them the circles represent places where extra information can be added, and distribute a handout of beautifully modified sentences from literature, with each element of the main clause underlined to make obvious the correspondence between the written sentences and the three icons on the board. They draw on paper their own iconic representations of the model sentences in the handout, recording visually which blobs each author has used. This exercise is a far cry from the sentence diagramming they learned to hate in junior high: first of all, they don't have to label the parts, and secondly, the purpose is more readily apparent to them: to find out where they can add information to their sentences and what that might look like.

In the fourth lesson, I project a new slide on the screen and ask them to write sentences describing what they see, this time adding as much information as they can, using any and all modification slots they want. Sometime during this class period there arises the need to use the word "modify, " which now genuinely belongs in their vocabulary because it is a name for something they're actually doing. Again I ask for volunteers to read their work aloud; most freshmen are shy, of course, but many of the shy ones have told me privately that they enjoy writing from slides and they love hearing each others' sentences.

Each sentence that is read aloud, I draw iconically on the board to make visually explicit the modification choices this writer has made. Most of them expand in the final position, and not very much, which is easy to notice after three or four drawings -- and now we are ready for the term "right-branching, " because we can see with our eyes the rightward expansion. Can anyone write a left-branching sen-

tence, I ask? The challenge is exciting to them; new hands go up to take a shot at it. I draw each sentence on the board as it is read out loud, and when Jose or Kristy or Jessica manages to use that left hand slot, students applaud a little, as if someone has hit the target at a carnival.

From here it's a short step to naming and explaining particularly effective modification constructions as they come up -- "Hey Fernando, you've just written an appositive!" -- and the students will then have taken a major step towards accumulating a repertoire of syntactic options. At some point the term "style" itself will beg to be discussed, which will be relatively easy to define for them as the choices any particular writer habitually makes: which sentence patterns does s/he use, and how does s/he modify them? Couldn't be simpler.

This also makes commenting on their papers easier: if I detect too many linking verbs, for example, which is a common stylistic choice among freshmen, I simply write "SLVC" in the margin and they know they are using that pattern too much. Moreover, focusing on the three patterns helps them read more accurately: by learning to find the subject and the verb in a variety of sentences, they can pick their way through texts with some sort of specific technique for making sense of complicated sentences.

In any case, dumping the recognizable techniques of traditional grammar and replacing them with a focus on grammar as pragmatic opportunity, has yielded very good results in my situation. Now I will read Summer's section of this presentation. Pretend if you can that I am now on the other side of the country and about six inches shorter.

As we stated in our introduction, Paula and I incorporate grammar into our style curricula in different ways. When I set out to develop my curriculum, I declared three personal goals for my writing classroom:

1) Learning should produce immediate results in students' writing,
2) Students should discover style techniques through their own work rather than hearing about them in a lecture, and
3) Students should work with their own writing, or, when necessary for whole-class demonstrations, with the writing of other students at their course level.

To accomplish these goals, I hold a style workshop during each of my essay units -- after the rough draft peer review and prior to the due date. My students bring their drafts-in-progress to the style workshops and, after some instruction, practice various techniques on their own drafts. Over the course of a semester, I conduct six of these style workshops, some covering two or three class meetings. For the purpose of this short talk, I will discuss only the first two workshops, which focus on the sentence level.

The first workshop teaches students to return to the invention stage of the writing process after they complete the drafting stage, in order to pack more information into their skeletal arguments. Using Christensen's concept of levels, I teach students to locate places in a sentence where phrase-length modifiers can be added, and help them acquire a repertoire of sentence constructions for adding them.

To begin the workshop, I present a meaty sentence written by a student in a previous semester, and divide it into levels. With some prodding, my students soon determine that the level 1 phrase is the main clause of the sentence, and that each lower level phrase somehow qualifies the phrases at the next higher level. For instance, a level 2 phrase might supply the time frame of the action described in the main clause, or describe conditions necessary for it to occur, or give a cause of the action. Here, I introduce the concept of modification to name the function the students have just described. I explain that multi-level sentences often give more specific information about the main clause than one or two-level sentences.

Next, I ask the students to divide a few of the sentences in their rough drafts into levels. Typically, they discover that their sentences contain only one or two levels. Using a sample sentence from one of the students, we identify locations where levels, or phrase-length modifiers, could be added. Could another level 2 phrase be added to modify the main clause? Where

could it go? If we wanted to modify that level 2 phrase, where would we put the modifier? In this way, I teach the students possible slots where modifiers could be added. In the process, of course, we discuss the constructions and punctuation necessary to add information to a sentence.

Next, I ask each student to select one sentence from his or her rough draft, and add levels to it. This sometimes sends the student back to the mental invention process. In other cases, the student selects information from nearby sentences in the paper to add to the sentence in question. Thus, the student discovers sentence combining, as a solution to a stylistic problem.

After each student has successfully added several levels to a few sentences, I lead the class in a discussion about the benefits and pitfalls of this style technique. The students generally recognize that the strategy can produce tighter, more specific sentences, but they also understand that it can produce overly complex, unreadable sentences. I suggest reading sentences aloud to guard against this problem, but I also recognize that my students will produce a number of clumsy sentences before they master effective modification.

The Christensen concept of modification forces my students to think about sentences spatially. They discover that they contain various pieces, resting on different levels. Then, they learn that sentences also contain gaps where new levels can be inserted.

In the second style workshop, the students' valuable new spatial perspective comes alive. Once they learn, in the first workshop, that sentences contain pieces and gaps, I can teach them, in the second workshop, that the pieces can be rearranged. The perception of separate, almost tangible, parts of a sentence -- a perception I painstakingly create in the first workshop -- allows the students to make the conceptual leap to varying their sentence structures.

Again, they bring their rough drafts to class, though they are now working on a new paper. This time, I hand out small slips of paper, just big enough for a single phrase. I ask the students to write each piece of one of their own sentences on a slip of paper, deleting the introductory capital letter and any punctuation. Suddenly, the pieces of their sentences are tangible and moveable. They are so moveable that a gentle breeze sends them flying across the room -- and freshman hands can't resist sliding them across tabletops. Which, of course, is exactly the point.

I ask the students to rearrange the pieces of their sentences in as many ways as possible, writing each way out using proper constructions and punctuation. I pick out a few students' sentences, and use them to discuss subordination and coordination. I link the words to a concept the students already understand: the Christensen concept of levels. Phrases at the same level, I explain, are coordinate, while those at lower levels are subordinate to those above.

Next, we discuss the added readability which results from using subordinators and coordinators to highlight the relationships between sentence parts. I act as the students' scribe as they brainstorm for subordinators and coordinators. When they finish, they have a repertoire of connectors.

Of course, the students had already used subordination and coordination and connecting words when they rearranged the slips of paper to form new sentences. That's the appeal of this method: like Paula, I simply explain the techniques which the students have already discovered, making them more conscious of the possibilities and offering a few refinements.

At this point, I ask them to go back to their drafts, find the sentence just before and after the one they were working with, and write it out on slips of paper as well. When they shuffle these slips of paper together with those from their first sentence, the students create even more complex and varied sentence structures, and learn the value of combining sentences. As they write down new sentences, I point out new constructions and help them untangle punctuation problems.

Then once again, I send them back to their drafts, this time to place their new constructions in the context of the original paragraph. I ask them to select one of their new sentences to replace the old ones, and write down their reasons for choosing it. This exercise leads to a class discussion about the benefits of various sentence structures, including concepts of rhythm and emphasis, as well as readability.

This method of teaching sentence structure varia-

tion uses tangible props to help students become comfortable with rearranging and combining sentences. The method not only teaches them the principles of subordination and coordination, but also pushes them towards a view of sentences and paragraphs as fluid entities that can be revised at will.

Now I speak for both of us. In conclusion, though we work in different ways with different populations, Summer Smith and I are thoroughly convinced that no course in composition, even at the college level, is complete without grammar instruction. As our experiences indicate, however, a flexible, nontraditional approach is necessary in order to adapt grammar lessons to the strengths and weaknesses of a particular group of students, and to keep them interested in the lessons. We do emphasize "nontraditional," because we are also convinced that formal, traditional grammar instruction is as unhelpful to student writers as Roland Harris showed it to be in 1963 -- but, as Martha Kolln pointed out ten years ago, the profession has overreacted to that Harris study and become virtually grammar-phobic as a result. Students need this kind of instruction if they are ever to come into their own as writers. We hope our ideas will be useful to others in the audience who recognize that.

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Punctuation and Grammar: Driving Forces in Composition

-- *Debra Laaker Burgauer*
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Two of my favorite cartoons illustrate student attitudes about punctuation rules. In the first cartoon, two graduate students stroll past a fraternity house. One students asks the other, " I've finished my master's thesis. What's the deal on punctuation?" (Parade Magazine 12 March 1989: 16). In the second comic strip, Charlie Brown is reading his sister Sally's homework. "You probably should start a new paragraph here, and then maybe capitalize this word. What else would you like to know?" he asks. Sally answers, "Show me where you sprinkle in the little curvy marks." "Commas," Charlie states. "Whatever," Sally responds with a look of quiet desperation. (Charles Schulz Peanuts). Both the graduate student and Sally, the quintessential frustrated first-grader, know that punctuation is important, but they are baffled by all of the rules. They see punctuation as an afterthought in their composition processes.

Based on my twenty years of experience with junior high, senior high, junior college and university students, I know only too well the points of these cartoons. After lessons and exercises on commas, typical eighth grade students will put commas after every third word in their essays, while high school students place commas after every fifth word. When I questioned these students about their "counting method" for comma insertion, their responses were amazing similar: "You said they were important, but I couldn't remember all those rules. So, I just counted, dropped them in, and hoped that some of them were right." This might also be called the "lottery approach" to punctuation. Most college students have figured out that the counting method is not the best solution; instead, my verbally articulate composition students often turn in essays written in short simple sentences that require almost no punctuation other than a period. When I ask these students why they talk like college students, but write like third graders, their responses usually recall a former teacher or two who graded punctuation so harshly that they have opted for the "safe sentence" approach to writing. We have all read too many of these "counting method" or "safe sentence" essays. But, what are we teachers to do? How do we help students negotiate the traffic jams and stalls of comma and semicolon rules? How do we get them to drive their readers through the meaning of their essays?

I have had success with an instructional analogy that compares grammar, punctuation, composition and reading to driving, one subject that always interests students of all ages and writing abilities. Basically, in this analogy, grammar is the roadbed and various punctuation marks represent different types of traffic signs. When used in effective ways, proper grammar and punctuation drive the reader through the writer's meaning. This analogy demystifies the complicated web-like relationship between grammar, punctuation, and meaning. To make these relationships easier to comprehend and to employ, I have developed a series of equations or formulas that are based on students' inherent linguistic knowledge and are easily applied to their own writing situations.

I must confess that this driving analogy developed quite accidentally (no pun intended). One day, when plodding through comma rules in a 1969 edition of Warriner's Composition and Grammar, I noticed that several of my high school juniors were reading Rules of the Road, required reading for Driver's Education, and probably the only book enthusiastically read by all high school students in America. I seized the moment, and the copies of Rules of the Road, and said -- "Okay, commas are like yield signs; they make the reader pause -- slow down, but not stop like a period which is more like a red traffic light. The students were delighted with the analogy, and a

spontaneous discussion about different types of driving "pauses" occurred. Because the students had all been passengers and were aspiring drivers, the road signs and driving analogy interested them. They clearly understood the nuances between traffic signs. The comma became a pause that indicated deceleration, or slowing, like a yield sign, or a dangerous curve sign, or as what some students wanted to call the "questionable" stop sign -- that stop sign in a quiet residential area that drivers slow for, but never really stop for because there is never any traffic. The period became the complete stop -- that red light at the busy intersection. The semicolon generated some interesting discussion because of its place between the comma and the period in the duration of its pause. Finally, the students concluded, after reading some sentences punctuated with semicolons, that the semicolon was more deceleration than a comma, like the 4-way stop sign where the experienced user of the intersection touches the brake pedal and stops momentarily before quickly moving on. One of my "bored-totally-with-English" students came up after class and said, "Hey, Mrs. Burgauer this punctuation thing is cool when we think of it like driving. So, why didn't you tell us this before?" From that moment in 1976, the driving analogy has been a reliable teaching tool which I have continued to use for fourteen years in my college composition courses.

We college writing teachers are often the last line of defense in helping our students understand and use grammar and punctuation effectively. Students come to us with twelve years of formal language instruction, some of which was good and some of which was bad; they also come to us with a lifetime of linguistic knowledge that is often overwhelmed by textbook rules and their exceptions, which students really hate. As I prepared this paper, I revisited my 1969 copy of Warriner's English Grammar and Composition: A Complete Course. It contains sixteen pages of comma rules alone, ending with a complicated summary of eight "major" rules subdivided into "minor" rules which are all written in the formal vocabulary of grammar instruction that only we English teachers could love (642). No wonder my juniors preferred Rules of the Road. Even current handbooks present very detailed and rather lengthy sections on punctuation. For example, Hacker's A Writer's Reference (Second Edition), while user-friendly in format, has 16 pages of rules and explanations for commas. Some texts, such as Strategies for Successful Writing: A Rhetoric, Reader, and Handbook (Reinking, Hart, and Von der Osten) have condensed the rules into six pages. The fifth edition of The Little, Brown Handbook (Fowler, Aaron and Limburg), while discussing commas in depth for 27 pages, does present a clear one page synopsis "Principal Uses of the Comma" (382), which is similar to my equations presented later. Traditionally, punctuation rules are relegated to the closing portion of textbooks, leading student to conclude that the rules are afterthoughts in the composition process. No wonder our students concede defeat and mutter "whatever" like Charlie Brown's sister Sally.

So, we teachers have a complicated task: we must simplify the rules, but not water them down; we must make those rules relevant to our students' composing processes without making students feel punished if they occasionally use a punctuation mark ineffectively -- notice I did not say incorrectly; and we must reinforce those rules in meaningful ways that help students see the relationships between meaning, grammar and punctuation. In a finished piece of writing these three elements depend upon one another; they are not just separate chapters in a textbook that are taught and tested independently. Once again the driving analogy has served me well in accomplishing this complicated three part task because it is interesting enough to appeal to well-prepared students who only need a cursory review, while it is complete enough to reach students who did not learn the connection between grammar and punctuation in high school. We college composition teachers are their last chance at learning these punctuation rules and their effective usage.

On pages seven through ten, I present the material I use to develop the driving analogy between grammar and punctuation. The material easily fits on several transparencies or can be duplicated onto just a few pages. My purposes are to untangle the web of rules, to demystify the use of commas and semicolons,

and to link meaning to grammar and punctuation. Students need to understand that punctuation is for their readers (Backschieder 874), not just for their English teachers. Most students of any age are good listeners, and many can punctuate their writing more effectively when they hear it read aloud. As Alan Cruttendan points out in his essay "Intonation and the Comma," the comma historically had an elocutionary function, ". . .unfettered by the prescriptions imposed by publishers and grammarians," and he asserts that the comma should "return to this basic principle of communicative clarity" (77). By reading their texts aloud, students spot areas that need more or less punctuation for clarity. In "Psyching Out Commas: Syntactic and Semantics Relations," J.E. Haney, building on Chomsky's theory, emphasizes that students need knowledge of "the psycholinguistic effects" of punctuation and knowledge of "sentence members" (774). The following equations and condensed rules unify grammar and punctuation.

PUNCTUATION MARKS AS TRAFFIC SIGNS

COMMA = A PAUSE, A DECELERATION, A SLOWING FOR A CURVE, A YIELD SIGN, A QUESTIONABLE STOP SIGN IN A RESIDENTIAL AREA

PERIOD = A COMPLETE STOP, A RED LIGHT AT A BUSY INTERSECTION

SEMICOLON = MORE DECELERATION THAN A COMMA WITH THE DRIVER'S FOOT ON THE BRAKE AND THE SPEEDOMETER REACHING ZERO, BUT THE STOP IS MOMENTARY, LIKE A 4-WAY STOP SIGN AT A MODERATELY TRAVELED INTERSECTION

ESSENTIAL GRAMMAR EQUATIONS

SENTENCE = SUBJECT + VERB + COMPLETE THOUGHT
ALL THREE ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED

FRAGMENT = MAY LOOK LIKE A SENTENCE, BUT LACKS ONE OF THE THREE ELEMENTS
= SUBJECT + VERB + **NO COMPLETE THOUGHT** Subordinate (dependent) clauses fit this equation
= **NO SUBJECT** + VERB + **NO COMPLETE THOUGHT** Verbal phrases
= SUBJECT + **NO VERB** + **NO COMPLETE THOUGHT** Noun phrases and appositive phrases

COMMA SPLICE = Sentence, sentence.

A MAJOR NO-NO!!

RUN-ON/FUSED SENTENCE = Sentencesentencesentence.

HOW TO CORRECT COMMA SPLICES AND RUN-ONS

1. QUICK FIX = CHANGE COMMA TO A SEMICOLON Sentence; sentence.

2. COORDINATING CONJUNCTION REPAIR = Use a coordinating conjunction to show equality of ideas.

   Sentence, and sentence.
   but
   or
   nor
   for
   yet (Lunsford St. Martin's 157)

3. SEPARATION FIX = Write as separate sentences, especially if the two sentences are long
   Sentence. Sentence.
4. A MATURE STYLE REPAIR = Use a semicolon, a conjunctive adverb (Lunsford St. Martin's 153), and a comma. This is a very "college" thing to do.
   Sentence; conjunctive adverb, sentence.
5. SUBORDINATE CLAUSE FIX = Change one sentence to a subordinate (dependent) clause using a subordinating conjunction (Lunsford St. Martin's 152).
   Subordinate clause, sentence.
   Sentence (sometimes a comma), subordinate clause.

This is an excellent place to introduce the ideas of embedding less important sentence details in "Relative Clauses" Unit Two in The Writer's Options: Combining to Composing (Fourth Edition) by Donald Daiker, Andrew Kerek, and Max Morenberg.

HOW TO CORRECT A FRAGMENT

Most fragments may be attached to an already existing sentence like Comma Splice fix #5, or may be rewritten into a sentence containing a subject, verb and complete thought.

ACCEPTABLE CONDITIONS FOR COMMA SPLICED SENTENCES

Rule: The comma alone is used to separate independent clauses, without any accompanying conjunction, under the following conditions:

1. Syntax -- the clauses are short and usually parallel in structure though they can be in any combination of affirmative and negative clauses.
2. Semantics -- the sentence cannot be potentially ambiguous, and the semantic relationship between the clauses is a paraphrase, repetition, amplification, opposition, addition, or summary.
3. Style -- the usage level is General English or Informal English.
4. Rhetorical -- the effect is rapidity of movement and/or emphasis. (from Irene Brosnahan's "A Few Good Words for the Comma Splice" 185)

Charles Dickens opens A Tale of Two Cities with two paragraphs of artfully crafted comma splices.

COMMA RULES CONDENSED

1. (Intro) Introductory "stuff" rule =
   Introductory element, sentence.
   a word
   an expression
   a phrase
   a subordinate clause
   (Lunsford St. Martin's 436)

2. (CC) Coordinating conjunction rule =
   Sentence, and sentence.
   but
   or
   nor
   for
   yet
   (Lunsford St. Martin's 437)

3. (ES) Extra "stuff" rule = nonrestrictive elements that do not limit the meaning of the sentence. (Lunsford St. Martin's 438)
   Subject, EXTRA STUFF/Nonrestrictive element, verb.
   Sen, EXTRA STUFF, tence.
4. (Scom) Series rule = use commas to separate words or phrases in a list or series
   A. Adjective, adjective, adjective noun
   , = and
   B. Sentence ending with item #1, item #2, item #3, and item #4.
   Comma before "and" is optional, but is necessary often times to avoid confusion. (Lunsford St. Martin's 442)

SEMICOLON RULES CONDENSED

1. (SS) Sentence; sentence.
2. (ScaS) Sentence; conjunctive adverb (Lunsford 153), sentence.
3. (Scol) When a series of items already contain commas, use semicolons to avoid confusion.
   item, #1; item, #2; and item, #3.
   for example: name, title; name, title; and name, title.

Throughout the equations and rules, I have referenced Lunsford and Connors' St. Martin's Handbook because at the present time I am most familiar with it. However, any current handbook can be used as a reference for more detailed and more technical explications of the rules. Generally, our students sincerely want to write well, to have their meaning be clear; however, most of them do not share our love for the "finer" points of grammar study. We must relate punctuation to the grammatical structure of the sentence and to the meaning the sentence conveys or our students will continue to see grammar as an afterthought or back-of-the-book subject. The use of punctuation should become as natural to them as driving a car.

The material on pages seven through ten is sequenced to build from simple linguistic knowledge of what makes a "complete" sentence, to explaining briefly when comma splices may be correct and effective, to reviewing the most important and useful comma and semicolon rules. The use of equations especially appeals to students who are more math-

ematically inclined and who often do not do well with rules written in long sentences. In fact, many students have told me that they like this "uncluttered" format and really like knowing that only two notebook pages can help them solve most of their punctuation confusion. As one student said, "Hey, Mrs. Burgauer, I really love this. It's so K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple Stupid)."

But, as we all know, two pages in a notebook will not insure effectively written and punctuated essays. The next step is for students to "know" the grammar/punctuation relationship. In "Teaching Grammar to Writers," Neuleib and Brosnahan point out that we teachers must understand the grammar ourselves and teach students "to demonstrate" their knowledge through stylistic choices (32). Here again the driving analogy is useful. I discuss how an essay of short, simple sentences is like driving through suburban shopping areas with complete traffic light stops every block or two. We get to our destination, but it is not an interesting drive. On the other hand, an essay of long overloaded or run-on sentences can be like the blur of interstate travel. Most students agree that a "fun" drive entails a variety of interesting scenery. Now the argument for stylistic choices in grammar and punctuation becomes clear to students as they realize that they can choose the road and its traffic signs that will make the reader's "drive" through the essay eventful and memorable. To promote stylistic choices, I use mini-lessons with sentence combining techniques, and in conferences with students, we mark areas in their essays where stylistic variation is needed. To further promote stylistic choices, my students do peer response activities which encourage them to punctuate sound, structure, and meaning (Sabin 78).

This fall I plan to use more strategies to reinforce the effective use of punctuation in relationship to grammar. On first "public" drafts used for peer response, students will indicate with an abbreviation (CC, Intro, ES, S) the rule that justifies their use of a comma. Then as students read each others' drafts, they will use highlighters to question the use of a particular mark or to indicate that a mark is needed (Timmons 20). For students who use word processing programs, I will suggest Timothy Giles' strategy for using "search" as a grammar checker (28-31). By typing in "," or "and" (or any other coordinating conjunction or conjunctive adverb) after the search command, students can check for comma and semicolon usage. Especially useful with WordPerfect, this search strategy gives students more focused information than a lengthy Writers' Workbench printout because the student can target specific types of revision. Also, they see the text as the cursor scans for specific items, and they can correct it easily without major word processing hassles.

While some students and teachers may think that the driving analogy oversimplifies the relationship between grammar and punctuation, I would argue that writing and driving are parallel in their complexity and in their simplicity. Both tasks require clear understanding of rules and precise application of them. Yet, each writing and driving experience is unique, challenging us to rely on what we already know, while also adding to our knowledge of these two tasks. Whether we want to admit it or not, teaching is a performance art. We need to use analogy to make our lessons meaningful and entertaining to our students. I love it when students tell me after class that they now "finally" know what a comma splice is because the equation definition has made it clear to them, or when they say that they feel confident in "listening" to their writing and punctuating more "by ear" than by guesswork. No writer, professional or student, wants to lose the audience or steer them in the wrong direction. The effective use of grammar and punctuation drives readers through essays to meaning-filled destinations.

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KeyNote Address:

The Uneasy Partnership between Grammar and Writing Instruction

-- Robert Funk

I wanted to use, as my title, the line "She taught me how to use the comma splice," which was a comment that my friend and co-author Susie Day once got on a student evaluation form. Although this comment illustrates the risks involved in teaching grammatical concepts to composition students, I couldn't quite bend it to fit the main focus of my speech today. So I chose, instead, a more pedestrian title. I took this title from an advertising blurb for Professor Rei Noguchi's recent book *Grammar and the Teaching of Writing* (1991). I think the phrase "an uneasy partnership" accurately describes my perception of the situation that exists in many college and high school English departments throughout the country. Indeed, I've noticed that a number of the presentations at this conference are addressing the same issues about the link between grammatical knowledge and writing competence that I'm going to be discussing today.

My thesis is quite straightforward, perhaps even obvious: I contend that an important professional partnership does exist between teachers of grammar and teachers of writing, and that we need to value and strengthen this partnership, if at all possible. But that partnership is an uneasy one, to say the least. In fact, "uneasy" is probably too polite a term: "downright hostile" is often closer to the truth -- unfortunately. Professor Noguchi, who consciously adopts a moderate position on the question of how grammar instruction affects the teaching of writing, speaks of "the staunch cadre of pro-grammar instructors" and the "hard-line anti-grammar teachers." The terms he uses, *staunch* and *hard-line*, suggest the often polemical nature of the grammar controversy.

I think most of us here are familiar with the main points of the conflict. Those in the hard-line anti-grammar camp claim that research reveals little evidence that direct instruction in grammar has any positive effect on a person's ability to speak and write. They insist that skills learned from grammar textbooks and worksheets do not transfer to the messy business of composing a full essay. And they point out that the more time spent studying grammar as grammar, the less time spent writing; and the less time spent writing, the less improvement in the written product.

On the other side, the staunch pro-grammar instructors are convinced that studying grammar improves language use, especially in writing. They maintain that a knowledge of grammar makes the writer aware of the resources available for creating effective sentences and that it also provides the student and teacher with a common basis for recognizing and analyzing sentence problems and for learning to remedy them.

I'm sure that those of us who are here today recognize that this conflict is not about the basic goal of language instruction. Both sides agree that students can and should become more effective and flexible users of their language. The debate is over the best methods by which to achieve this goal. The most sensible and productive way to reconcile the pedagogical differences between the staunch grammarians and the hard-line compositionists -- and one that several presenters at this conference appear to be pursuing -- is to integrate grammar instruction with student reading and writing, to take the emphasis off **formal grammar** and put it on **functional grammar**. But that approach, simple and clear as it may seem, has not brought the two sides together.

A lot of English teachers continue to disregard -- or deny -- the distinction between "teaching grammar as an academic subject and teaching grammar as a tool for writing" (Noguchi 17). The fact is that grammar -- both as a description of language structures and as

a standard of verbal etiquette -- still plays a big part in what many teachers, administrators, and parents consider to be basic literacy. Thus, in many schools and colleges across the country the teaching of formal grammar is still taken for granted. New teachers and graduate assistants are given a text like *Warriner's* (on the high school level) or Evergreen (on the college level) and told to teach it.

On the other side of the battlefield, many composition specialists, primarily at the university level, I think, have abandoned the attempt to teach any grammar at all. They focus, instead, on helping student writers to develop a unique voice and acquire a number of strategies for finding and organizing better content, and in doing so, they hope to foster an improved self image, a confidence and pride in the act of writing, a desire to make it perfect on every level. These teachers seek to avoid a crippling and useless preoccupation with grammar and error, in the belief that students can get it right readily enough when they genuinely have the motivation to do so **and** in the belief that repeated exposure to the written standard will enable students to acquire standard forms by some kind of linguistic osmosis (D'Eloia 373).

In other words, some teachers of English still teach formal grammar religiously, while other teachers of English avoid grammar like some form of flesh-eating bacteria. Any sense of forging a viable partnership between grammar and rhetoric, at least in the minds of these people, still seems a dim and distant goal, despite continuing efforts to integrate the two fields of study.

Now, obviously there are a number of reasons for this stand-off. The staunch pro-grammar advocates tend to believe that studying grammar contributed to their own ability to use language effectively, and they conclude, rightly or wrongly, that the same will be true for their students. Besides, many of these people like to teach grammar, and publishing companies are more than willing to provide them with textbooks and workbooks in which explanations, exercises, and drills come conveniently packaged. I think we also have to acknowledge the role that standardized testing plays in affirming the inclination to teach formal grammar: it's a lot easier to score the multiple-choice items in the Test of Standard Written English than it is to evaluate an essay.

As for the hard-line anti-grammarians, they tend to fall into two groups: those who learned to write successfully without rigorous training in grammar and those who became frustrated when their attempts to teach formal grammar failed to produce significant writing improvement. Of this frustrated group, Professor Noguchi writes:

> This failure has resulted not so much because of a lack of effort on the part of teachers -- many have spent their professional careers trying to bring fruitful results -- but, ultimately, because expectations of grammar were unrealistic. Like the near-mythical omnipotence of cod-liver oil, the study of grammar became imbued with medicinal powers it simply did not possess, particularly with respect to writing ills. (15)

I also think that there's a larger political struggle that contributes to the hard-line anti-grammar stance taken by many composition teachers -- and it is this situation that I want to comment on more specifically. (I'm speaking now primarily about the university level, which is the arena that I know best.) I think you all know about the longstanding division of labor in university English departments, where, according to Richard E. Miller, "it is taken for granted that meaningful work occurs in literary studies and menial labor takes place in the composition classroom" (165). This division between literature professors and composition specialists should not be underestimated. It has a long history, and the harsh economic realities in higher education for the past twenty years or so have only increased the tensions. It is still true, as Winifred Horner pointed out several years ago, that "at most universities the study and teaching of literature are the serious business of departments of English and are supported by research funds and salaries and rewarded by promotion and tenure" (4), while the economic truth, according to Art Young, is that "the teaching of writing makes up more than sixty percent of the instructional load of English departments, it finances graduate students, it provides jobs, and it supports the study and teaching of literature" (48).

Given this situation, it is not surprising to hear angry voices from both sides of the divide. The underpaid, underappreciated composition specialists regard PhDs in literature as reluctant colleagues, ill inclined and ill suited to teach writing, whose materials, assignments, and methods seem designed to allow

themselves to indulge in their own specialized literary pre-occupations. The threatened literature people look askance at research in composition and claim that writing is not an academic subject at all: "I'm sorry to have to say, " writes one full professor of literature, but "departments cannot justify hiring composition specialists as such. These persons cannot teach anything because they do not know anything" (Harmon 32).

In the past decade, composition specialists have begun to combat their relegation to the economic and intellectual lower classes, and we have seen a steady growth of graduate programs in composition and rhetoric, a proliferation of articles and book-length studies on the theory and practice of composition, and the development of workers' rights initiatives like the Wyoming Resolution. And while some of these developments have arisen as defensive maneuvers, as strategies to protect turf and rationalize self-interest, they also represent the politics of teaching writing. As James Slevin has pointed out, the field of rhetoric and composition has emerged in our own time as a form of educational and political reform (154). Composition specialists -- from Mina Shaughnessy, Ken Macrorie, and Richard Ohmann to James Berlin, Andrea Lunsford, and Mike Rose -- have consistently addressed questions of who gets to attend college, what happens to them, and how their writing can a make a difference for them, as well as what it means to acquire knowledge and change what is claimed to be known. The catch phrases about composition instruction with which we are all familiar -- writing as process, writing to learn, writing as a way of thinking, writing as a way of knowing -- reflect a concern with such matters as "access" and "empowerment" and the way that higher education is conducted in this country (Slevin 154).

And this is where the controversy about grammar comes in. Many composition specialists, I think, regard the teaching of grammar as a throwback to the kind of education they have been trying to reform. They also take suggestions about the use and value of grammar instruction as ideological positions that serve to undercut composition studies in the curricular politics of university English departments. Or, to put it another way, composition specialists are often on the defensive: like Rodney Dangerfield, they feel they don't get no respect. And who can argue with them? Almost always, it is composition that gets taught by teachers in the least privileged positions. Even at universities where rhetoric and composition is an accepted academic discipline, composition specialists often have to perform administrative tasks that deter them from pursuing the research and scholarship that will earn them tenure and promotion and the esteem of their colleagues. So when a comp specialist hears a comment like "These students can't write because they don't know grammar" or "All these students need is a good course in grammar, " she's likely to take such a remark as both an insult and a threat. She feels, quite rightly I think, that such simplistic attitudes about language and writing denigrate her professional standing. If writing is merely a craft that anyone with a *Harbrace Handbook* can teach, then there isn't any need for graduate courses in rhetorical theory or travel funds and release time to support research about the writing process. This feeling of professional insecurity, I believe, has contributed a great deal to the unyielding position that many composition experts take on the subject of grammar.

So where does this leave us? Well, for one thing, it leaves us in the cross-fire between composition and literature. If we want to improve the partnership between grammar instruction and the teaching of writing, then one of the most important things we can do is support efforts to improve the status of writing teachers and increase the respect accorded scholarship in rhetoric and composition. (By the way, I would make this recommendation to all of my colleagues, regardless of their academic specialties. I think it's disgraceful the way our profession continues to operate with attitudes and practices that debase the teaching of writing.) In addition, I think we need to insist that all English majors, both graduate and undergraduate, have training in rhetoric and language. I have no problem with requiring English majors to study grammar as an academic subject. I think they should have more than a casual knowledge of the theories of language and writing and should also know something about the teaching of writing. It's my observation that

all English majors are potential teachers, even those who say they don't want to be. Too many graduate students, who have taken nothing but literature courses, wind up teaching three sections of freshman composition without any idea of where to start and how to proceed.

On a more practical level, I would suggest that if we want composition instructors to teach grammar as a tool for writing, then we need to supply them with efficient, effective procedures for doing so, as several of the presenters at this conference are clearly doing. We must work to develop a grammar for writers that is inductive, actively analytical, stimulating, and discovery-based. If students are going to write better sentences (which is what the controversy about grammar usually boils down to), they must write a lot of sentences -- not someone else's sentences but sentences of their own. We must remember that the chief limit of grammatical analysis is that it has no necessary connection to the synthetic process of writing. Observing grammatical patterns is not the same as constructing them. And constructing them is not the same as proofreading them. We diminish the partnership between grammar and writing instruction when we lose sight of this essential distinction (D'Eloia 389).

And finally, let me make one more suggestion. Let's all relax a little, lower our voices, and draw on the confidence that comes from doing valuable, important work. Teaching writing is important. The study of language, including grammar, is valuable. And with intelligence and persistence and an understanding of the conflicts involved, we can improve the partnership between grammar instruction and the teaching of writing. It's a goal worth pursuing.

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The Philosophical Roots of Traditional English Grammar

-- *Robert Einarsson*

There is a significant cluster of documents written mostly during the Eighteenth Century in Scotland which inquire into the subject of "Universal Grammar." With chapter titles like "Of the Origin and Progress of Language," these documents often posit a fictional "primitive man" who has all of the faculties of reason but no taught language. On this basis, they construct narratives that detail the possible evolution of language.

However, these narratives are probably more useful, and probably intended, as a philosophical investigation into language, rather than as genuine history. The philosophical view of language that emerges in these narratives is specifically a view that is based on the Parts of Speech. The evolution of language is the evolution of the Part of Speech categories, and furthermore, the Parts of Speech constitute a complete explanation of linguistic epistemology.

The basis of Adam Smith's version of the narrative, for example, is the evolution from the concrete through higher degrees of abstraction. Hence he argues that the noun substantive is the "first" Part of Speech. He specifically points to the most concrete among this concrete category, i.e., the proper name. The proper name would later be abstracted to form category names. A necessity then emerges for verbs and adjectives. They both function as attributes that serve to define a particular individual within the category. At the far end of the evolutionary scale he introduces the preposition category, and then as the apex, the height of abstraction, the word "of":

> A preposition denotes a relation, and nothing but a relation. But before men could institute a word, which signified a relation, and nothing but a relation, they must have been able, in some measure, to consider this relation abstractedly from the related objects . . . . The invention of such a word, therefore, must have required a considerable degree of abstraction. . . .
>
> The preposition "above", for example, denotes the relation of superiority, not in abstract, as it is expressed by the word "superiority", but in [a concrete instance].
>
> Ask any man of common acuteness, What relation is expressed by the preposition "above"? He will readily answer, that of "superiority". By the preposition "below"? He will as quickly reply, that of "inferiority." But ask him, what relation is expressed by the preposition "of," and, if he has not beforehand employed his thoughts a good deal upon these subjects, you may safely allow him a week to consider his answer. . . . The preposition "of", denotes relation in general . . . . It marks that the noun substantive which goes before it, is somehow or other related to that which comes after it, but without in any respect ascertaining how . . . . We often apply it, therefore, to express the most opposite relations; because, the most opposite relations agree in so far that each of them comprehends in it the general idea or nature of a relation. We say, "the father of the son", and "the son of the father;" "the fir-trees of the forest", and the "forest of the fir-trees." . . . The word "of" . . . serves very well to denote all those relations, because in itself it denotes no particular relation, but only relation in general; and so far as any particular relation is collected from such expressions, it is inferred by the mind, not from the preposition itself, but from the nature and arrangement of the substantives, between which the preposition is placed. (Smith, 212-213)

The Universal Grammar debates provide a re-

markable range of opinions on the arrangement and primacy of the Parts of Speech. As well, they show the folly in dismissing the Parts of Speech as an elementary (in the bad sense) word classification or a "mere taxonomy." The Universal Grammarians are attempting to prove that Part of Speech categories are rationally valid, i.e., that they mirror the functions of the mind, or, as they occasionally concede, at least the functions of language itself. Such a claim will have implications for pedagogy: if this categorical system is in fact somehow inherent to the mind, teaching will be both easiest and most effective if it is somehow founded upon this categorical system. I have found first year college students remarkably adept at analyzing the Part of Speech components of sentence structure, that is, the Part of Speech designation of phrases and clauses, as well as their interconnections (also a Part of Speech issue). I can see why these grammarians believed that these categories were somehow just waiting there to be trained and exploited in the classroom.

It is important to note that Universal Grammar is different from the Eighteenth Century school known as UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE. In his Essay Towards a Real Character and Philosophical Language, Bishop Wilkins is seeking to create an artificial language that corresponds to reality. He attempts to define a new Parts of Speech, based on Aristotle's ten predicates. He claims to be forming a language that precisely replicates the elements of reality. This of course has unfortunate consequences in that it opens the door to the classic accusation of anthropomorphism:

> The foundation of such classification, much in vogue with the language-planners, is in fact Aristotle's ten predicaments, eked out with categories from Scholastic philosophy. This gives rise to a circularity in which scholars, claiming to catalogue the real world as a preliminary to its symbolization, take as their starting-point such Aristotelian categories as substance and accident, and then seek properties in the phenomena to correspond to them. . . . this procedure is not peculiar to the inventors of artificial languages, but is common to all the new supposedly empirical sciences, being particularly prevalent in botanical classification. (Padley, 362-363)

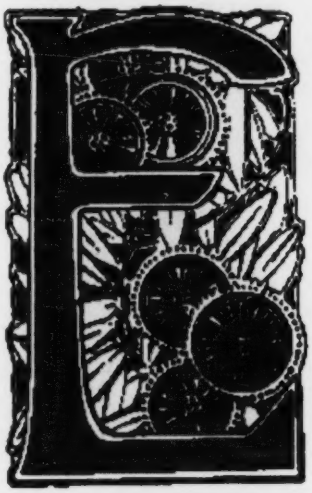
However, the quotation provided below proves that the Universal GRAMMAR school was never interested in the linguistic mirroring of reality. Instead, it is interested solely in the proclivities of the mind, at best, or of language, at least. Universal grammar cannot be convicted of anthropomorphism, because it does not refer to the external world. It examines the pattern of rational categories, and it inquires into the connection between these categories and the mind or language. This quotation, from an article out of the first edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, clearly illustrates that Universal Grammar does not seek to connect the theory of language with the theory of nature:

> In the natural world, no attribute can possibly exist without a substance to which it belongs, nor any substance without possessing attributes. But the mind admits not of such limitations; but can with the utmost facility separate every quality from every object and consider them apart; as colour without surfaces, surfaces without solidity, or weight without matter. In this manner, the mind abstracts those attributes which denote motion or energy from their movers or energizers, in the same way that it abstracts qualities from their substances. And it is these motions thus abstracted which form that species of words called verbs; in the same manner as those attributes which denote quantities and qualities abstracted from their necessary substances, form adjectives.
>
> Here then we discover a most essential difference between the order of nature, and that representation of it which man makes by means of words. For in nature, every quality must at all times be united with some substance, nor can ever be exhibited separate from it; but in language, every attributive, if it be considered at all, must be separated from the object to which it naturally belongs. (Encyclopedia Britannica, "Of Universal Grammar," 1771)

These quotations, clearly, insist on a fundamental difference between the order of nature and the order of mind or language. Thus Universal Grammar may have more association with deconstruction, as in the inherent slippage between linguistic meaning and the reality that it represents, than it does with anthropomorphism or anthro-imperialism.

Still, the root principle behind Universal Grammar remains the Aristotelian concept of substance versus attribute. "Substance" is the term for a thing taken separately from all of its qualities, forms,

versions, and aspects (both grammatical and casual). "Attribution" is the act of predication. Of course, these are purely metaphysical concepts; the "unattributed substance," for example, is harder to find than the philosopher's stone. Except in the landscape of rational language. Every "noun substantive," for example, "man," is an example of a substance without any attributes. "Nouns adjective," for example "writer," do carry some category information along with the substance. Hence there is a subtle but real distinction, made by Universal Grammarians, between the two types of noun.



Substance is a sealed category, while attribution is prone to sub-categories. This is seen in every adverb, the "attribute of an attribute," i.e., the Part of Speech that modifies either verbs or adjectives, which are both already classified as attributes of nouns. The attribution of a core noun is the entire purpose and structure of the sentence, whether these attributes are word, phrase, or clauses acting as adjectives or adverbs. Other than Substance and the various Attributes, only the two Connective categories remain, the conjunction and the preposition. This view narrows the Parts of Speech to six basic functions, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, conjunction, and preposition. It is helpful to students if we emphasize this clear set of larger categories, and avoid the bewildering jargon of Parts of Speech that are merely sub-categories of these six, the articles, determiners, participles, gerunds, and so on. Indeed, this set of six functions does seem to be comprehensive. For example, the adjective function really does include the possessive pronoun, the possessive case of the noun, the article, and the adjective proper. Even forms such as the infinitive and the participle can be absorbed into the more fundamental categories. The infinitive is of course the noun form of the verb, the name of an action. And the participle is of course either an adjective or a noun form of a verb, an action attributed but not taking place in the time frame.

One attack on the validity of this schema comes with the observation of functional shift. Some have used the observation that a given word, phrase or clause may shift to different Part of Speech functions as a basis for casting doubt on the stability of language and hence of meaning. Of course, it does not take such persons long to use this as a justification for casting doubt on everything. It is true that with frightening ease a given word can be a noun, a verb, and then an adjective; even whole phrases and clauses may take on and change these functions. Tell students that the word "mountain" is an adjective, or that "try" is a noun, and you will stun then momentarily. Infinite similar demonstrations are available. The same prepositional phrase may function as an adjective or as an adverb; a clause may be a sentence one minute, and a noun the next.

Functional Shift makes it look like there is no system to English at all; that is, until we notice that some things never change: no matter how slippery the individual words, phrases, or clauses, the SET OF FUNCTIONS that they perform never changes. There is a little mnemonic that students may find handy: "OTFAS: Only The Functions Are Stable." These functions, the Parts of Speech, remain a comprehensive explanation of the system of English. What fulfills each function may change, but the functions are clearly limited to the six Parts of Speech. To the Universal Grammarians, these are unchanging and complete.

The basic categories are comprehensive and durable. But they operate not merely on the word level. They also explain the higher levels of syntax. The Parts of Speech explain essentially all of the higher level sentence structure possibilities. Every phrase and every dependent clause functions either as an adjective, and adverb, or a noun. In fact, it soon pays to stop calling it a noun clause, and just admit that it is a noun. Emphasizing this functional unity will help students to become aware of the structural solidity that goes on at these higher levels. The Parts of Speech are the elementary functions of the human mind, or at least of human language, not merely a set of name tags to be dispensed with and embarassed of.

What makes Universal Grammar an explanatory system, and not in fact a "loose taxonomy," is the

hierarchy identified among the Parts of Speech. The Categories are not merely a list, but a set of levels. One important Universal Grammar observation is the decision to categorize the verb and the adjective as versions of one major function. Both the adjective and the verb can be seen as essentially noun modifiers:

> In examining the different attributes of substances, we readily perceive that some of them have their essence in motion; such are, "to walk," "to fly," "to strike," "to live," &c. Others have it in the privation of motion; as, "to stop," to rest," "to cease," "to die," &c. And others have it in subjects that have nothing to do with either motion or its privation; such are the attributes of "great" and "little," "wise" and "foolish," "white" and "black," and, in a word, the several "quantities" and "qualities" of all things. This therefore furnishes a natural division of attributives of this order; and grammarians have called all those, whose essence consists in motion or its privation, VERBS; and all the others have been called ADJECTIVES; each of which we shall consider separately.
>
> Verbs are all those principal words which denote "attributes," whose essence consists in motion, or energies, (for we chuse to make use of this last term, as it implies the exertions of the mind as well as those of the body), or their privation. This order of attributives differs from the other called "adjectives;" not only in the particular above-mentioned, but also because adjectives denote only qualities or quantities, which do not admit of any change of state; whereas the verbal attributives may be considered as in several different states, and therefore admit of several variations in the term employed to express these. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1771:734)

While they both essentially modify the noun, the adjective and the verb are clearly separate categories because of the extra elements that apply only to the verb, i.e., its use of tense, aspect, and mood, and especially its ability to perform the act of assertion itself. There is an interesting gradual scale in the following observation:

> The Adjective denotes a simple quality, as brave, cruel, good swift, round, square. The Participle denotes a quality, together with a certain modification of time; as . . . loving, which relates to time present . . . [and] loved, which alludes to time past . . . . The Verb is still more complex than the participle. It not only expresses an attribute, and refers that attribute to time . . . but it also comprehends an assertion; so that it may form, when joined to a noun, a complete sentence, or proposition. (Beattie, 348)

Reasoning that the verb and the adjective belong together as attributes, Universal Grammarians long ago refuted the still persistent framework which places the noun and verb as equally fundamental. This framework then cannot explain why we have an adverb but not an "adnoun." It produces a clearly inefficient diagram. There is something wrong with the role given to adverbs in this system:

NOUN < ---- adjective < -- adverb < -- adverb

VERB < ---- adverb < -- adverb

On the other hand, the Universal Grammar schema provides a strong and clear place for the adverb. Being the modifier both of the verb and adjective, the adverb is a modifier of a modifier, or what they refer to as a second order attribute:

1.	2.	3.
SUBSTANCE	ATTRIBUTE	SECOND ORDER ATTRIBUTE
	Verb < --------	adverb < ---- adverb
NOUN <		
	Adjective < --	adverb < ---- adverb

The Universal Grammarians have demonstrated a durable, comprehensive set of rational functions. In addition, it has been noted that these functions apply not only on the level of the single word but also comprise the role of every the phrase and dependent clause. Finally, let us note that the only remaining aspect of the sentence, i.e., the independent clause itself, is in fact a product of the these Parts in combination. We can I think convincingly conclude that all of sentence structure is comprised within the above chart of the Parts of Speech. And if this chart explains all of sentence structure, does it not also both demystify and deepen grammar as a subject of study, and in fact restore its status as a theory of rational thought and language.

29

However, I would argue that the classroom value of this material should not be in the direct teaching of Parts of Speech theory. Instead, if we are certain that this structure is at the root of language, this may give us an insight into what students will respond to because it is in their linguistic nature.

This subject, I would propose, is sentence structure. If we teach sentence diagramming, we will be drawing upon and sharpening this innate analytical capacity. This is particularly true for sentence diagramming that requires the student to indicate the Part of Speech function of each unit. We can dispense with the word level right away, and deliberately inculcate the larger phrase and clause units and connections. Composing the individual sentence is a skill equivalent to fundamental reasoning; it is an innate logical faculty that we are allowing to fester untrained when we do not teach traditional grammar. The vital point is conceiving of the higher word groupings as single, closed entities that interconnect. This is structural awareness in itself, which is perhaps the basis for education itself.

Modern attacks on linguistic truth focus on the arbitrary nature of the sign, but they ignore the objective nature of the underlying categories. Hence, Karl Uitti tells us that "for the medieval schoolmen, logic was the 'a priori' formulation that acted as 'langue,' the system behind the process of utterance" (56). Like the scholastics that they essentially were, the Universal Grammarians use reason alone to derive an 'a priori' set of fundamental functions. But the Eighteenth Century also saw the end of scholastic reasoning, with Locke's empiricism. We are now in the thick of the experimental epoch. The opponents of grammar use the experimental method, rather than the method of pure reason. They assail us with oddly construed experimental studies to show that teaching grammar doesn't work. However, we know that it must work. Being pre-enlightenment in the good sense, we can argue for the 'a priori' role of the Part of Speech functions. In turn we can argue, without construing some classroom experiment (though we could do that too if we cared little enough to sacrifice a group of students), that sentence structure analysis has fundamental educational value.

In order to become aware of sentence structure, students must see that the functions remain stable from the word to the phrase to the clause level. It is worthwhile to begin ignoring and subsuming the word level as early as possible, to enhance the view of the larger structures. Students must see that the entire phrase or clause group, working as a unit, moves position intact and performs the function as a whole entity. We may define the phrase and the dependent clause as "a group of words unified by performing a single Part of Speech function." With the number of functions so limited, we can identify exactly four graphic indicators that are capable of a diagram analysis for any sentence in English. They include underlining the independent clause, boxing the noun, square bracketing the adjective, and round bracketing the adverb. These diagrams will reinforce the Parts of Speech logic behind the sentence structure:

IC n <--[aj] <--(av)

[Editor's Note: There should be a box around the "n".]

Parsing Analysis Examples.

Lincoln:

THE YEAR <-[that is drawing <-(toward its close)] HAS BEEN FILLED <-(with the blessings <-[of fruitful fields and healthful skies.])

Students:

THE EVENING <-[that is drawing <-(toward its close)] HAS BEEN FILLED <-(with the aura <-[of elegant music and graceful conversation.])

THE SOCIAL CIRCLE <-[which had been created <-(through much labour)] WAS INHABITED <-(with the delights <-[of witty and loving companionship.])

THE VALUES <-[that Jane Austen expresses <-(in this novel)] ARE DESCRIBED <-(through the actions <-[of the characters and events.])

THE WOMAN <-[who is pleasing <-(in manner)] IS CONSIDERED ACCOMPLISHED <-(by most people <-[in culture and society.])

UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR
(The Eighteenth Century in particular)

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Note: One observation on functional shift illustrates two important phrase types, the "key word" phrase versus the "whole function" phrase. In a key word phrase, the unit is produced because all of the words modify a central word; for example, a noun along with its modifiers gives a noun phrase. But whole function phrases are the ones that do not contain a word of the given Parts of Speech type. For example, the phrase "through the door" may act as an adverb, even though it contains no adverbs in itself. With the whole function phrase, it is the fact of performing one Part of Speech function that creates its unity. The verb phrase expresses its peculiar importance when viewed in these terms. Note that the verb phrase is always a key word phrase; it cannot be created by a collection of words that is not centered upon the main verb. Noun, adjective, and adverb phrases can all be created in this way, but not the special quality of the verb, the energizing act of assertion.

After Jespersen: Nexus & Modification

-- Ed Vavra
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Students don't like grammar, and for good reason. Much of their educational experience in English, in spite of NCTE, has been spent in learning grammatical rules and definitions, most of which they cannot use. Who wants to memorize useless information? The fault, I would suggest, is not in the students, but in those of us who believe that grammar should be taught. One of our primary problems is that we cannot agree on what ALL students should be taught, and why.

During the past decade as editor of Syntax in the Schools, I have seen numerous articles, conference presentations, and books, few of which address this question. I have, of course, seen many presentations about what a particular instructor believes that his or her particular students should study. Thus I have heard professors of future English teachers explain how they teach their students transformational grammar. But I have yet to see a comprehensive presentation of what these professors expect their future teachers to DO with this transformational grammar. I have also heard many arguments for a variety of grammars - traditional, structural, systemic, transformational, etc. In fact, some of the most heated discussions I have heard have been about which terms should be used.

All of these discussions, I would suggest, miss the point of the problem. For one thing, they overlook the fact that different grammars were developed for different purposes. Early English grammarians created grammars to teach "correct," upper-class English to an upwardly mobile society. Structural grammars were developed to record and study unknown and dying (primarily American Indian) languages. The creators of these grammars often did not even understand the language for which they created a grammar. Transformational grammars, on the other hand, were developed to explore how the human mind generates sentences -- that is why they are often called "transformational/generative." NONE of these grammars was developed to help native speakers of English understand how the English language works. And that, I would suggest, is what our students (all of them) need. They need a pedagogical, not a scholarly grammar.

By "pedagogical" I do not mean the hybrid or traditional grammars (such as Warriner's) that are currently and widely used. These books have the wrong purpose, i.e., they attempt to teach the "rules" of grammar, piecemeal. Rarely can students ever move from the simplistic sentences in these books to the complicated creations of their own writing. But instead of explaining what I do not mean, perhaps I should turn to what I do: I want to suggest that two concepts ("nexus" and "junction") developed by Otto Jespersen should be at the core of any pedagogical grammar.

The KISS Principle, Nexus and Junction

"KISS," for anyone unfamiliar with it, stands for "Keep It Simple, Stupid." Most pedagogical grammars are too complicated. In many textbooks, for example, it is not at all unusual to find separate sections for compound subjects, compound verbs, compound objects, compound clauses, etc. The implication of this is that some things can be compounded and some cannot. Since I cannot think of any construction in English which cannot be compounded, why don't we replace all these sections with one simple rule: "Any construction can be compounded"? I can see some of my colleagues searching their brains for exceptions, but I would suggest that they have the wrong hat on. Scholarly grammars are meant to deal with all the possible exceptions; a pedagogical grammar should create a basic framework. Students (K - college) are not going to go looking for exceptions to the rule. On the other hand, they will probably be pleased with it, since it probably reduces the size of their grammar texts by about 10%. It is, in essense, an application of Occam's razor: one rule that will do the work of five is better than the five. Jespersen's nexus and junction can be an even better point for simplifying pedagogical grammar.

When asked what grammar students should study, Noam Chomsky suggested Jespersen's. (Davis 165-66) One of the last great traditional grammarians, Jespersen was already working in the direction of the structuralists, that is, instead of simply classifying constructions, he was beginning to explore the relationships among them within sentences. Having completed his discussion of what he called the "three ranks," he wrote:

> If we now compare the combination *a furiously barking dog (a dog barking furiously)*, in which *dog* is primary, *barking* secondary, and *furiously* tertiary, with the *dog barks furiously*, it is evident that the same subordination obtains in the latter as in the former combination. Yet there is a fundamental difference between them, which calls for separate terms for the two kinds of combination: we shall call the former kind *junction*, and the latter *nexus*. (97)

Jespersen never defines either junction or nexus. (Perhaps a lesson we should learn from him?) Instead, he explores the concepts through examples. In essence, "junction" is what we commonly call "modification." But "nexus" is a concept for which English grammar did not have a name. Jespersen closes with:

> We may end this chapter by giving a tabulated survey of the principal instances of nexus, using characteristic examples instead of descriptive class-names. In the first column I place instances in which a verb (finite or infinitive) or a verbal sustantive is found, in the second instances without such a form.

1. *the dog barks*	*Happy the man, whose...*
2. when *the dog barks*	*However great the loss*
3. Arthur, *whom* they say *is kill'd*	
4. I hear *the dog bark*	he makes *her happy*
5. count on *him to come*	with *the window open*
6. *for you to call*	*violati hospites*
7. *he* is believed *to be* guilty	*she* was made *happy*
8. *the winner to spend*	*everything considered*
9. *the doctor's arrival*	*the doctor's cleverness*
10. *I dance!*	*He a gentleman!* (131)

Although I have questions about a few of Jespersen's examples, I want to suggest that "nexus" denotes the relationship between a verb, its subject(s) and its complement(s), even if the verb is not present in what the transformationalists refer to as "surface structure." "Nexus," in other words, denotes the basic S / V / C structure of the English sentence.

After Jespersen

Nexus is the driving force of the English language, even the oral language. If my wife says "bread," I would be totally perplexed unless the situation supplied a subject and verb: "(You) buy bread." "Do you want bread?" "(You) pass the bread." This suggests that syntactic connections are not all equal -- some (nexal) are stronger than others (junctions). To make sense, verbs have to have subjects, and some verbs have to have complements. To demonstrate this, we can consider having heard someone say, "He bought." Having heard this, we would tend to ask "bought what?" We would not, on the other hand, ask "bought where?" We expect the nexal pattern to be completed. If we get modification ("at the store"), we, of course, understand it, but we do not necessarily expect it. Particularly in written texts, nexus is the engine which leads the reader through the text. Junctions go along for the ride. (If you prefer a different metaphor, nexus is the skeleton and junction is the flesh.) Except for interjections, EVERY word in EVERY sentence participates in either nexus or modification. Since modification is generally understood, I want to focus on nexus.

Although traditionally grammarians have considered sentences to be binary (S/V or subject and predicate), it is easier for students to view the sentence pattern as S/V/C (subject / verb / complement). When I presented this idea at a conference, one linguist objected that I cannot do this because the pattern of sentences "IS" S/V. My questions, quite simply, are "according to whom?" and "for what reasons?" As I noted at the beginning of this paper, there are a number of different grammars, and the adherents of each of them claim that the language "is" whatever their grammar says it is. Their definitions work, within the areas for which their grammars were developed. But thus far, we have been unable to develop an effective pedagogical grammar. In what follows, I will try to rely partially on Jespersen and partially on my readers' common sense, to suggest that including the complement in the nexal pattern will make syntax much easier for students to understand.

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Some readers will object that the complement cannot be included because not all verbs will allow complements. This objection confuses mental patterns with their material realizations. Blueprints for a house may include windows, doors, porches and many other things that a builder decides not to include. Failure to include these things does not make the blueprints stupid or nonsensical. Humans simply understand that these things, in this case, were not needed or desired. Similarly, in "He runs every day." readers understand that "runs" does not require a complement. Linguists have even developed a term for such missing, or "zero" elements. Thus "He runs every day" has an S/V/C pattern with a zero complement.

In surface structures, zero elements can even occupy the subject and verb slots. Imperatives, for example, have zero subjects: "Close the door." Less frequent, but totally acceptable, is the zero verb, which is used most frequently when the verb in a second clause repeats that in the first: "Mary brought the fishing poles; Bob, the lunch." Students will, in other words, have to deal with missing (or zero) elements of the S/V/C pattern, even if we do not make the complement an equal element of the nexal pattern.

The essence of nexus, of course, is the verb, whether finite or verbal. Finite verbs are those that are traditionally underlined twice; all other verbs in sentences are verbals and must function as either an infinitive, a gerund, or a gerundive. What I want to suggest is that EVERY verb, in context, can be viewed as the center of a nexal pattern. For students, this means that one set of rules applies to ALL verbs; they do not need to learn one set for finite verbs, an entirely different set for infinitives, still another for gerunds, and still another for gerundives.

Infinitives

Jespersen gives numerous examples of infinitives used in nexus, among them (130):

I hear the dog bark.
count on him to come
for you to call
he is believed to be guilty
the winner to come
he makes her happy

Note that Jespersen includes complements ("guilty," "happy") as part of the nexus. Extending Jespersen's direction, we can easily consider the following to be examples of nexus based on an infinitive:

(A) I saw the dog chase a cat.
(B) They elected Bill *to be* president.
(C) I wanted *me* to get a hotdog.
(D) They wanted *themselves* to go.

[* * implies words that are normally ellipsed.]

In each of these examples (and in many cases that become more complicated) the nexal pattern can simply be considered as an infinitive phrase. Such phrases can function in any way that infinitives can. (In these cases, of course, they are all direct objects of the preceding verb.) In (A), "dog" is the subject and "cat" is the direct object of the infinitive "chase." In (B), the infinitive itself is ellipsed, as in Jespersen's "her happy." "Bill" is the subject, and "president" is the predicate noun in the S/V/C infinitve pattern. I included (C) and (D) as a reminder that logical (or semantic) parts of the pattern are always implied: if I wanted someone else to get a hotdog, that person would have to have been included in the pattern: "I wanted Bill to get a hotdog."

Pedagogically, an advantage of nexus is that it eliminates the need for "objective" and "subjective" complements, two concepts which I never understood. (And if I don't, I don't imagine that many students find them easy either.) Martha is great friend, and if I pick on her it is simply because I'd rather read her books than someone else's. Here is how Martha defined "objective complement":

> The slot following the direct object, filled by an adjectival (Pattern IX) or a nominal (Pattern X). The objective complement has two functions: (1) It completes the idea of the verb; and (2) it modifies (if an adjective) or renames (if a nominal) the direct object: "I found the play *exciting*"; "We consider Pete *a good friend.*" (356)

Then, of course, students have to deal with "subjective complements":

> The nominal or adjectival in Pattern II, III, IV, and V sentences following the verb, which renames or modifies the subject. (360)

When I said that I find these complements confusing, it was not simply that such explanations are usually verbose, repetitive, filled with jargon, and incomplete. (Which subject does the subjective complement rename, the subject of the finite verb, or the subject of the infinitive? If you already think you understand these concepts, then you think you know the answer. But students, I would suggest, are lost.)

To me, the concepts of objective and subjective complements simply do not make sense, no matter whose explanation I read. Let's agree that a complement "completes the idea of the verb." "Exciting," to me, does not complete the idea of "found": the sentence does not mean "I found exciting." Rather, "exciting" completes the idea of the ellipsed "to be": "I found the play *to be* exciting." Moreover, if we consider "exciting" to be an objective complement, then "play" is the direct object. But now we find ourselves in a situation in which the direct object does NOT "complete the action of the verb." The sentence does not mean "I found (discovered) the play." It means "I found *the play exciting*," which is exactly what we see if we consider "play exciting" as an infinitive phrase with the infinitive ellipsed. The S/V/C pattern of verbals not only allows us to discard the concepts of objective and subjective complements, it also aligns the grammatical explanation with the meaning of the sentence.

Gerunds

In discussing gerunds and nexus, Jespersen gives as examples "happing in *having found* a *friend*" (140) and "He insisted on the *chamber carrying out* his *policy*" (141). Notice that here too the complements are considered as part of the nexus and that nexus includes the subject of the gerund. As far as I know, this concept is not very distant from traditional explanations of such sentences as:

We remember the *cat's bringing* us a dead *rat.*"

Eating apples is good for health.

Note that the subject of the second example is not simply the gerund, it is the gerund phrase, i.e., the entire nexal pattern. For people who are overweight, eating may not be good for their health, but eating apples probably is.

Actually, I don't foresee many objections to what I have said about gerunds. My students, however, are often surprised that gerunds can have subjects and complements. Their surprise is the result of the "multiply-the-rules-and-concepts" approach of traditional grammar. They wouldn't be surprised if more of our instruction focussed on the underlying patterns (S/V/C) rather than on a plethora of rules and exceptions.

Gerundives

Jespersen doesn't consider gerundives (often called "participles") in his discussion of nexus, for the simple reason that gerundives are modifiers. As verbals, hence verbs, they are, however, still the center of an S/V/C pattern, the subject being whatever is modified: "They saw the laundry hanging on the line." Since many of the dangling/misplaced modifiers in students' writing result from the detachment of the "participle" from its subject, I would suggest that having students focus on the S/V/C pattern of verbs would allieviate their problem.

Some grammarians argue that participles function adverbially, as in "They were having fun playing kickball." Although these grammarians have a good grammatical argument, I have yet to see a sentence in which a student made a mistake with the adverbial function of a participle. I therefore emphasize that "gerundives function as adjectives."

Noun Absolutes

A noun absolute is usually defined as a noun plus participle (often ellipsed) that functions, usually, as an adverb. Jespersen's examples of nexus include noun absolutes: "*everything considered*" (131), "with *the window open*" (131), and "She sat, her *hands crossed* on her lap" (127). Most grammar books note that noun absolutes can also function as nouns, as in Jespersen's example of the prepositional phrase "with the window *being* open." Many years ago, a student pointed out to me that, given the concept of nexus, the noun absolute is often a better explanation for sentences such as "They saw the windmill turning." We had just analyzed the sentence in class, and someone had said that "windmill" is the direct object of "saw" and that "turning" is a gerundive modifying "windmill." But a bright young lady in the back objected. The sentence does not, she said, mean that "They saw the windmill." Nor does it mean that "They saw the turning." It means that "They saw the *windmill turning.*" "Windmill turning" is thus a noun absolute used as the direct object of "saw." In that this grammatical description more closely reflects the meaning of the sentence, I not only think that this student was right, I have used her explanation ever since.

The Basic Sentence Pattern -- S / V / C

If we return, for a moment, to the basic sentence pattern of English, I would suggest that the preceding discussion has suggested the value of considering S / V / C as THE basic sentence pattern. Jespersen includes the complement in nexus, and the concept provides students with one simple pattern to explain a variety of verbals. But the concept also provides students with an easier way of understanding basic sentence structure -- ONE pattern, with four basic variations, explains almost all sentences.

The variations, of course, are in the complement. And just as they learn to identify subjects by making a question with "What" and the verb, so they can find the complement(s) with the question "verb + what?" Thereafter, a simple sequence can help them identify which variation they are dealing with:

1. If nothing answers the question "verb + what?", there is no complement, i.e., the sentence has a zero complement.
2. Next, they should check to see if whatever answers the question is an adjective. If it is, the complement is a Predicate Adjective.
3. If whatever answers the question is not an adjective, they should next check to see if the answer renames the subject and if the verb indicates an equality (of any kind) between the subject and the complement. If it does, then the complement is a Predicate Noun, as in "Sleeping children resemble angels."
4. If the complement is not a Predicate Noun, they should check to see if it indicates "to or for whom" the verb is done. This question catches Indirect Objects.
5. If none of the above apply, the complement has to be a Direct Object.

Although the preceding procedure may seem complicated at first, students can easily learn it, as they must anyway. In traditional grammar, the only way to determine what "tall" is in "She grew tall" is to realize that "tall" is an adjective. Note too that this procedure shifts attention away from types of verbs (transitive, intransitive, and linking) and onto the underlying pattern embedded in a particular sentence (which is what we must use anyway to determine if many verbs are transitive, intransitive, or linking). I almost believe that pedagogical grammar could simply ignore these three categories.

One final argument can be made for S / V / C as the basic sentence pattern. Traditional grammar, as well as almost all linguistic grammars, views the sentence as bipartite (S / V) and then considers the complement as a subordinate aspect of the verb: Verb phrase = V + complement. This results in a two-tiered diagram of the pattern:

S V

V C

This diagram does not make sense with S / V / PN sentences, since the essence of such sentences is to indicate an equality between the subject and the complement. (Clinton is President; that is an apple; summer is my favorite season.) How can the complement be equal in meaning if it is on a subordinate level in the pattern? The S / V / C sentence pattern thus puts the complement on an equal level with the subject, where, I would suggest, it logically belongs.

Whose grammar?

Many linguists and grammarians will disagree with the concepts I have presented. But my questions, and I hope yours, are "For whom are we developing a grammar?" "And for what purpose?" There is general agreement that the traditional, structural, transformational, etc. grammars that have been tried in the classroom have not worked very well. I am suggesting that the reasons for that are that these grammars have been developed by people interested in grammar and that these grammars have not been developed with the express aim of assisting native speakers of English get a conscious control of the grammar that they already use. Students are not interested in these grammars because the grammars are too complicated and too focussed on exceptions and problem areas. The concept of nexus, on the other hand, simplifies grammar, applies to every verb, and in some cases provides a more logical fit between the sentence being analyzed and the explanation.

One of the reasons that grammatical instruction in our schools has been so ineffective is that students (and teachers) have spent so much time on grammar books, rules, and definitions, that they have rarely adventured into the fascinating world of analyzing how sentences work in their own reading and writing. The concepts of nexus and modification not only simplify grammar, they also provide important tools

for such analysis. There is no better way to close this presentation than with the words of Jespersen:

> Let me only express the hope that elementary teaching of grammar in future may be a more living thing than it has been up to now, with less half-understood and unintelligible precept, fewer "don't's," fewer definitions, and infinitely more observation of actual living facts. This is the only way in which grammar can be made a useful and interesting part of the school curriculum. (346)

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Note: The ideas presented in this essay are further developed in my Teaching Grammar as a Liberating Art. (1994) Rose Parisella Productions, 30 Marvin Circle, Williamsport, PA 17701.

Whose Judgments? A Survey of Faculty Responses to Common and Highly Irritating Writing Errors

Margaret Kantz & Robert Yates

The Problem: Errors Just Won't Go Away

The existence of surface error -- by which we mean sentence-level errors of grammar, syntax, spelling, and punctuation -- continues to plague teachers in every field. The taxpayers who fund our institution often judge the success of our teaching -- hence, our own professional competence -- by the surface accuracy in the writing of our graduates. In fact, the president of our university once told the English faculty that scarcely a week goes by without his receiving a telephone call from an employer complaining about the writing abilities of a newly-hired graduate. More recently, a newsletter criticizing this school and purporting to come from area businessmen mentioned the poor writing capabilities of our graduates. Central Missouri State University has completed the third year of the FIPSE-sponsored Continuous Process Improvement project, involving the assessment of our majors. It seems appropriate, then, to consider how we evaluate our students' writing skills.

Sentence level errors by students have been investigated in two different ways. First, researchers have had informants judge errors that students commit. Connors and Lunsford (1988, 1992) identified the most common kinds of errors in students' writing, and Hairston (1981) documented that employers in the business community are disturbed by surface feature errors. Errors that almost all of her informants found highly irritating were labeled "status marking." The second line of research used the writing of English as a Second Language students to look at how faculty judge errors. This line of inquiry revealed that faculty judge some errors as more "grievous" than others (Vann, Meyer, & Lorenz, 1984; Janopoulos,1992) and that the relative degree of displeasure with which professors greet particular errors varies with discipline and age (Santos, 1988). To our knowledge, no study has attempted to relate judgments about errors or how frequently errors are committed.

These are real questions because facility and accuracy in writing come from years of practice rather than from intensive labor in single courses, and they are habits that must be reinforced by writing in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes. Skills acquired in one context do not automatically transfer to another, and even when skills may seem to be mastered, students often write carelessly because they believe that writing errors do not matter outside of English classes.

It would be nice to be able to send a clear message to our students that their teachers, regardless of discipline or other variables, do in fact value accurate writing, and that some consensus exists about what kinds of errors matter most. Accordingly, we asked the questions listed on page 1.

Subjects.

Except for five administrators, the subjects for this survey were 141 teachers who had responsibility for the conduct and grading of their classes. In some departments, like Psychology, that included graduate students. A demographics sheet attached to the survey asked for information about age, academic rank, gender, total years of college-level teaching experience, college and department membership, number of students seen each semester, and amount of student writing seen each semester (Appendix A). Because the primary mission of this institution is teaching rather than research, we did not distinguish between responses by tenure-track and non-tenure-track teachers, between fulltime and parttime teachers, or between graduate-level faculty and other teachers.

Materials

We constructed a 6-page survey of 78 items, taking about fifty minutes to complete, asking respondents to circle errors and to indicate their degree of irritation with each error on a 6-point scale. We began with three of Hairston's (1981) status-marking errors and the five most common errors identified by Connors and Lunsford (1988) because we wondered if these errors are considered particularly serious. Given the complexity of written English, it seems inevitable that

most writing will contain some errors. It also seemed reasonable to assume that teachers focus on eliminating the most serious errors, like the status-marking errors. We also included eleven less common but highly salient errors from the 1988 study, plus ten homophonic spelling errors (Connors & Lunsford, 1992). This gave us 29 categories (Appendix B).

We decided to have three examples of most errors so that we could judge whether our subjects were responding to the error or to the sentence in which the error occurred. Three examples is not a large sample, but it is more informative than the uncategorized single examples used by Hairston. Because we wanted our survey to be short enough that our colleagues would be willing to complete it, we did not attempt to suggest the context of the sentences or include the passages that they were taken from. To ensure an even distribution of error types, we divided the survey instrument into thirds, placing one example of each error type in each third, using a random number table to determine placement of the items within each section.

Because many errors, even when organized into subcategories, may appear in almost infinite variety, we exercised some arbitrary control over the kinds of errors we would use. For example, we wanted three different kinds of tense shift instead of three examples of one kind, e.g., present to past, and different conjunctions (and, but, so) in the category of no comma in compound sentences. We wanted different words as both examples of nonstandard verb forms (reran, wrote, sang) and use of a wrong word (enterprises, cites, intertwine). For the missing comma after an introductory element, we decided to use elements of one word, a phrase, and a clause. Technically, these decisions mean that we actually have only one example of each of these errors. But it could also be argued that since every sentence and every reader is different, every sentence-reader interaction is a unique subtype. We thought our decision allowed us to maximize both rigor and comprehensiveness.

For the six confused-pairs errors and the it's/its errors, we thought that two examples of each was enough to make the point. We collected one example of each version of the error, e.g., one incorrect affect and one wrong effect. The four commonly misspelled words, we thought, could be represented by a single example of each. These eighteen items were distributed evenly throughout the survey, again, using the random number table to determine the exact placement.

To ensure that our colleagues would rate the items honestly instead of just marking every sentence as having a serious error, we inserted six correct (OK) sentences, taken from Connors and Lunsford's *St. Martin's Handbook*, one on each page of the survey but randomly placed on the page. This plan resulted in a survey containing 78 items, with 13 items per page (Appendix A).

Except for the six OK sentences, the survey items all came from typed student papers, i.e., papers written out of class, meaning that the writers had had opportunity to revise their work. The sentences were all written by native speakers of English, mostly students enrolled in our own classes; almost half of the items were written by upperclassmen. We shortened or otherwise modified some sentences to eliminate other errors and expressions that might confuse or mislead the raters; for example, the OK sentence "Pens poised in anticipation, the students waited for the test to be distributed" was revised to begin "With pens poised" because subjects in pilot tests kept marking it incorrect. The survey was pilot tested on nine English graduate assistants and then, in a second round, on eight upperclassmen enrolled in a section of Advanced Rhetoric taught by a colleague. The pilot subjects were asked to circle the error in each incorrect sentence. We interviewed the pilot raters about their marking of the survey items; sentences whose error was consistently misidentified were thrown out, and new sentences were tested and inserted. The OK sentences were also pilot tested to ensure that readers would recognize them as being correct. Getting such agreement proved surprisingly difficult! We informed the pilot raters and faculty of the presence of these correct sentences but not of their number or location.

When pilot subjects ignored our instruction to circle the error that they were responding to, we could not be sure that they were in fact responding to the intended error. Interviews showed that sometimes they were responding to some other aspect of the sentence. We therefore decided to ask our faculty raters to circle the error in each sentence where they detected one.

Because of the length of the survey and the large number of error types being surveyed, we anticipated that raters might have extra trouble with the first part of the survey. We therefore created three versions of the survey, with the parts arranged 123, 231, and 312.

We also hoped that this strategy would discourage our colleagues from doing the survey collaboratively.

Rating Scale.

We used a 0 - 6 rating scale, with 0 meaning "the sentence is correct" and 6 representing the highest degree of irritation. We expected that the less irritating errors would be overlooked by some readers and that the more irritating errors would be seen by most of the readers. The actual errors were thus rated on a scale of 1 - 6 (Appendix A, "Instructions to Raters").

The survey, with the demographics sheet and a cover letter, was administered to 27 of the 34 academic departments, including their deans, and to the department of Educational Services (n = 381). Because of the survey's length and the potentially sensitive nature of the request to mark errors in sentences, no forms were distributed until one of the researchers had first met with either the department chair or, preferably, with the department, to explain the purpose of the survey and the reasons for the instructions. Departments not included in the survey were those with whom we were unable to schedule a meeting. We endeavored to distribute equal numbers of each type of form to each department. The participating groups were:

> Accounting, Agriculture, Art, Biology & Earth Science, Chemistry & Physics, COIS, Communication, Curriculum & Instruction, Economics & Finance, Educational Development Center, Electronics Technology, English & Philosophy, Graphics, Human Environmental Science, Management, Manufacturing & Construction, Marketing & Legal Studies, Military Science, Music, Nursing, Political Science & Geography, Power & Transportation, Psychology, Sociology & Social Work, Theatre, at least 1 of 4 college deans, Dean of Clinical Services & Certification

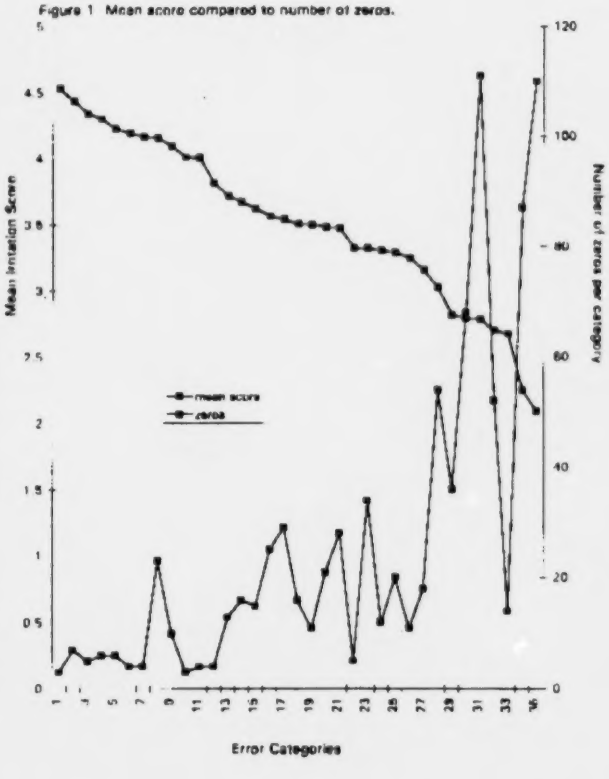
Our colleagues did the survey at their own convenience, with no other controls, and returned the forms to us via campus mail. In the College of Arts and Sciences, forms were collected by each department's representative to the College Writing Across the Curriculum Committee.

Results

Ultimately 144 complete, correctly done surveys were returned, a response rate of .39. ANOVAs done on SAS showed no significant differences among the three versions of the survey. The first 26 items in each version of the survey consistently received somewhat higher irritation scores than did the rest of the items, regardless of how the parts were arranged. We judged this to mean that the faculty responded to the first example of each error type that they saw rather than to any specific grouping of sentence errors and that they were otherwise consistent as they worked through the survey.

Evidence for a hierarchy of errors. Our results, as indicated both by mean level of irritation and by the number of "correct sentence" responses, indicate that a hierarchy does indeed exist. Figure 1 shows the mean irritation score for each error category contrasted with the total number of zero ratings (overlooks) for the error category, plotted on an X-Y axis. Highly irritating errors, like nonstandard verbs, have both high means and few zeroes, meaning that not only did raters consider them serious, but they also spotted the errors whenever they occurred. By contrast, the OK sentences and comma errors have low means and large numbers of zeroes, indicating that people often overlooked these errors and did not consider them very serious when they did see them. Because the most irritating errors were seen by almost all of the raters, we interpreted the large number of zeroes on the less serious errors as confirmation that readers do indeed

Figure 1 Mean score compared to number of zeros.



consider these mistakes relatively unimportant. The spelling errors had especially high standard deviations (X = 1.4, vs. the X S.D. of 1.3) and low numbers of zeroes (X = 12.9, vs. the overall X of 25.5 zeroes), indicating that although most of the raters detected the misspellings, they disagreed about the significance of these errors.

Relationship between frequency and mean irritation score. Figure 1 also shows a clear negative correlation between error frequency and irritation level ($r = -.77$, $p = < .00001$), with the eleven most irritating errors clustered in the upper left corner and the six OK sentences in the lower right corner. This means that the most highly irritating errors, as determined by this study, occur relatively seldom in students' writing (Connors & Lunsford, 1988), and the most frequently occurring errors were judged by this faculty to be relatively innocuous.

Agreement of English teachers with teachers in other disciplines about the hierarchy of errors. Again, the results indicate a high level of agreement across disciplines as to which errors are more or less serious. In a preliminary evaluation, we looked at English faculty and Educational Development Center faculty separately, and grouped the other faculty together as "other." Spearman Rank correlations show a highly significant agreement among the three groups, as shown in Figure 2:

Figure 2: Spearman rank correlations for error rating among English, Educational Development, and all other faculty.

	Other X (n = 118)	EDC X
ENG X (n = 19)	.80*	.84*
EDC X (n = 7)	.88*	

*p = < .00001

Sample correlations showed less high but equally significant correlations among the three groups. The Educational Development faculty had higher mean irritation scores for the most serious errors than did the other two groups, and the content area faculty had the lowest irritation scores. The EDC faculty were also the most accurate of the three groups at detecting OK sentences.

Because the number of faculty from each department that participated in the study was often very small, we were unable to run other correlations among individual departments. However, we thought that it might be instructive to examine correlations among disciplines. Accordingly, we divided the participating academic faculty into four "disciplinary" groups, as follows:

Business: Accounting, Curriculum & Instruction, Management, Marketing & Legal Studies, Military Science (n = 25)

Hard Science: Chemistry & Physics, Computer and Office Information Systems, Biology & Earth Sciences (n = 12)

Liberal Arts: Art, Communication, Economics & Finance, Educational Development Center, English & Philosophy, Music, Political Science & Geography, Psychology & Counselor Education, Sociology & Social Work, Theatre (n = 59)

Vocational Technology: Agriculture, Electronics Technology, Graphics, Human Environmental Sciences, Manufacturing & Construction, Nursing, Power & Transportation (n = 29)

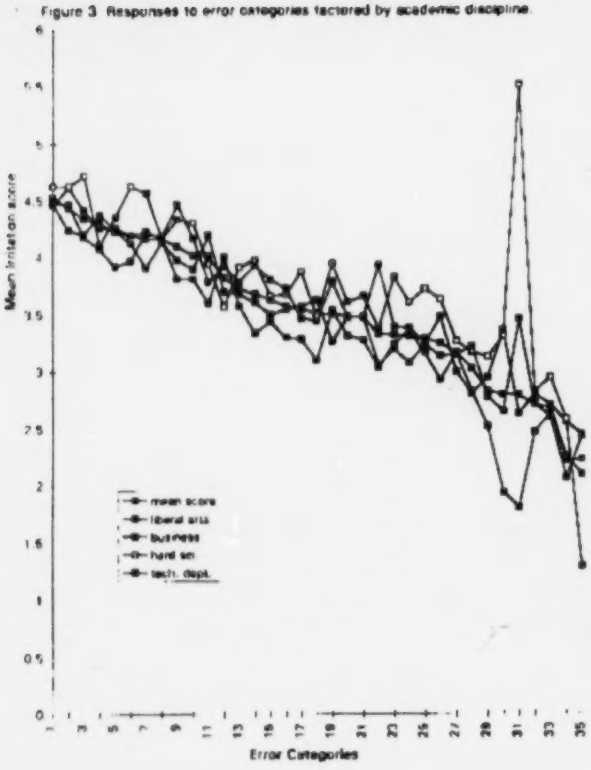
When plotted on a multiple X-Y axis, as shown in Figure 3, responses show agreement about the relative seriousness of the errors. The mean irritation rates of the four disciplines as compared to those of the other demographic groups, appear in Table 1.

Demographic Factors Influencing Response to Errors. As Table 1 shows, certain groups of faculty were more irritated by the errors in student writing than other groups were. However, when the errors were plotted on an X-Y axis by each separate demographic factor, the same pattern of overall agreement appeared. For example, although women, as in Hairston's study, were consistently and significantly more irritated by specific errors than men were, by almost .3 of a point, the sexes agreed on which errors were relatively more or less serious, as shown in Figure 4.

Likewise, although full professors were more irritated by errors than associate professors, by .45 of a point, and although "other" faculty, e.g., graduate assistants, were markedly less attuned to errors than were the fulltime teachers, respondents of all academic ranks indicated broad agreement about the relative seriousness of individual errors (see Figure 5).

The only demographic factor that revealed what we considered a meaningful difference in response

Figure 3. Responses to error categories factored by academic discipline.



was amount of writing seen in a semester: Teachers who reported seeing "a lot" of writing were not only more annoyed by errors than were teachers who reported seeing "some" or "little" writing, but they were also much more accurate in detecting the OK sentences than were teachers who see relatively little writing (see Figure 6).

Accuracy of Responses to the Survey. One of the most common student complaints about teachers is that the marking of errors is idiosyncratic, i.e., that what one teacher will mark as an error, another teacher will allow. Our results tend to confirm that impression, within certain limits. To see how consistently teachers found the errors in the sentences, we counted "overlooks," i.e., sentences incorrectly marked zero (correct). And to see if teachers were in fact responding to the errors that we left in the sentences, we counted "misdiagnoses," i.e., marking of anything in the sentence other than the intended error.

The results, given in Table 2, show that the women in our study were more accurate than the men in spotting errors, that more experienced teachers overlooked far fewer errors than inexperienced teachers, that full professors overlooked fewer errors than did their lower-ranking colleagues, and that teachers in the Hard Sciences and teachers who assign much writing spotted more errors than did teachers in other disciplines and teachers who assign relatively little writing. Thus, teachers who saw errors tended to be more highly annoyed by them than were teachers who were more likely to overlook errors.

In the accuracy of diagnosis, we found other patterns. Women were more attuned to our categories of error than were men, as were teachers who assign much writing. But we found high percentages of "many" misdiagnoses by older teachers, higher-ranking teachers, and teachers in the vocational technology departments. In other words, many teachers have their own ideas about what constitutes an error. Some of the corrections clearly involved stylistic preferences, as in this response to OK sentence #1 (Connors & Lunsford, 339; the hypercorrections and comments are boldfaced) "**There are** many people **who** fear success because they fear they do not deserve it. **lacks economy**." We found objections to correctly placed commas (the "correct" errors are underlined; "Being a nonmember, they allowed me to attend one of their meetings, and I was quite surprised") and correctly used prepositions ("It was a place were my big brother

Figure 4. Responses to error categories factored by gender.

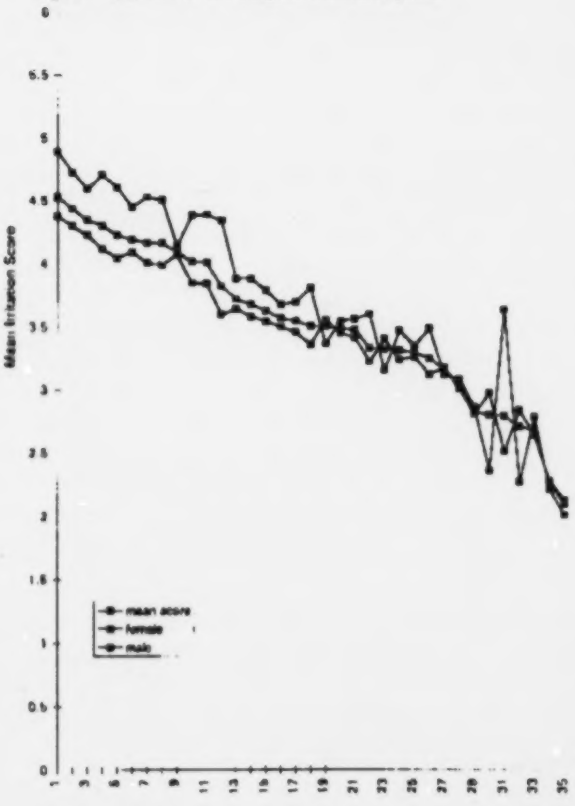
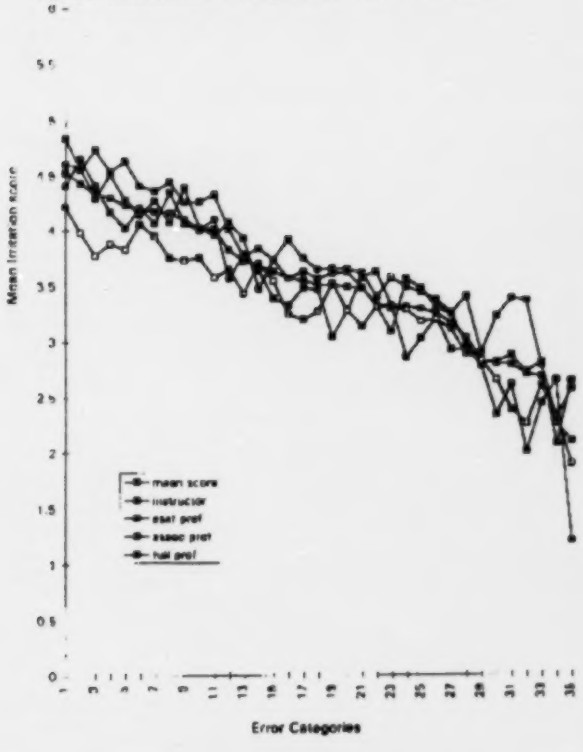


Figure 5 Responses to error categories factored by academic rank.



and I could spend hours teasing and talking to [with] each other").

It is worth noting that no teacher correctly diagnosed each error in the survey. In other words, every participant reacted at least once to some facet of a sentence other than the specific error that got the sentence chosen for the survey in the first place.

Discussion

College teachers agree that some writing errors are more serious than others. These results confirm Hairston's contention that not all errors are created equal. Although this result seems intuitively obvious, we were surprised that some of the most irritating errors involved homonym pairs like "you're/your."

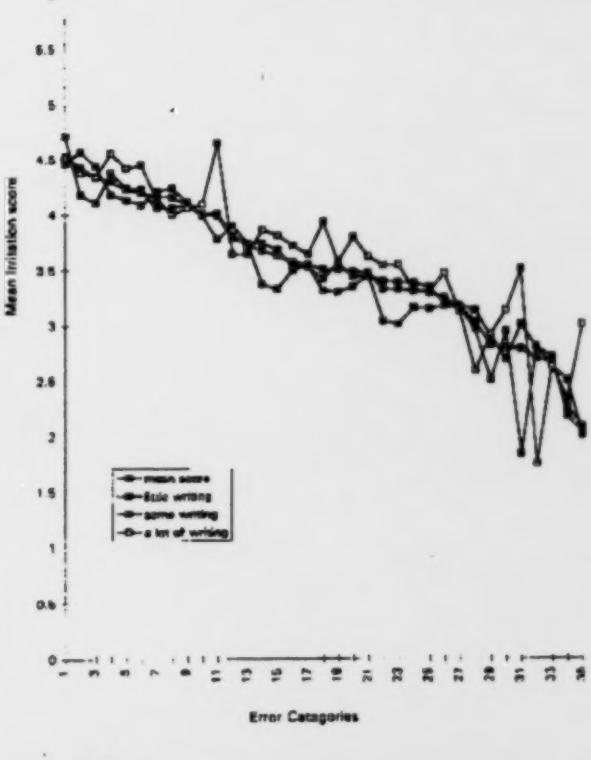
Teachers in all disciplines agree on what the error hierarchy is. Although the large standard deviations show that almost any error will receive a spectrum of responses ranging from "this is accurate" to "this is unacceptable," there is a broad consensus -- at least on this campus, among those faculty who were interested enough in this project to give an hour of their time to it -- that a hierarchy of errors exists and that we agree on what that hierarchy is. This is welcome news.

Moreover, the scoring differences among the three groups (English, Educational Development, everyone else) are what one would hope and expect to see. Since EDC faculty teach developmental writing, with heavy emphasis on surface feature accuracy, one would expect them to be vigilant and intolerant of error. It is reassuring to see that the English faculty agreed with their colleagues in other departments about what errors matter; perhaps predictably, the English faculty were the most picky about the "rightness" of the OK sentences.

Of course, these results do not "prove" that content area faculty are just as competent to detect and respond to errors as are English teachers; the low response rate suggest that perhaps only those faculty who felt competent to do this work participated in the survey. Clearly, however, many faculty in a variety of disciplines both can and do do a good job of responding to errors. This is a message that we want to share with each other and with our students.

The negative correlation between frequency and seriousness of error is also reassuring, since it suggests that students mostly avoid making the most serious status-marking errors. But that is not a message that this team of researchers wants to send

Figure 6 Responses to error categories factored by amount of writing assigned.



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to students, since we suspect that they might take it as permission to continue making "less irritating" kinds of errors. We are thus heartened to see the presence of four homophonic spelling errors among the eleven most serious errors (*to/too, were/where, there/their, your/you're*). These are words that everyone learns in first grade, and mistakes in using them will not be caught by computer spellchecking programs (although some text-editing programs will catch them). We faculty can therefore send our students a firm and unanimous message that we see these misspellings, including those that do not irritate us, and that continued carelessness and failure to edit manually have a clear negative effect on the perceived quality of writing.

As for the least serious errors, which involved commas, we account for their relative acceptability in three ways: 1) Conventions of comma usage may be changing. 2) There is no clear, easily teachable rule for, say, when to insert a comma after an introductory word or word string. 3) People may be confused about how to use commas and may have decided that they are just too much trouble to worry about. Given Sloan's [1990] finding that professional writers made as many comma errors as college freshmen, this last explanation seems especially likely.

Women and teachers who see much student writing every semester are more aware of errors, more annoyed by them, and more accurate in detecting them than are other instructors. It would be surprising indeed if vigilance and accuracy regarding writing errors did not correlate positively with the amount of writing assigned. Apparently, the more sensitized one becomes to error, the more of it one sees, and vice versa. We are at a loss, however, to account for the gender difference in attitude toward error. When we presented these results to our colleagues, they suggested that women may be socially conditioned to care more about writing errors, that women may be more in touch with their feelings than men, and that men may be less willing to acknowledge being bothered by things generally, including writing errors. We also note that the different percentages of women in our four "disciplines" might account for the variations in how annoying members of these disciplines, as groups, considered the errors.

Teachers do not agree about what constitutes correctness. Although we found clear agreement about certain matters of grammar (e.g., nonstandard verbs), spelling, and some matters of punctuation (apostrophe usage), the fact that so many teachers objected to the OK sentences and identified "nonmarked" errors in the test sentences suggests that teachers have personal preferences that they apply to students' writing. Cognitive reading theory explains why the teachers gave every possible response, from 0 to 6, to almost every item on the survey. Since the concepts of "correctness" and "style" are enacted through innumerable instances of daily usage, the distinction between them must be blurred; on a scale of relative seriousness, probably, specific categories of, say, grammar errors and stylistic lapses would overlap. For example, one respondent circled both the "you" and the missing comma in the sentence "If you observe one of the concert choir's classes you will see the hard work that the students and instructor put in their practicing," and commented "generalized 'you' = 3, comma needed = 3," apparently meaning that he considered the punctuation error and the use of the second person as equally serious faults. The discussion by Flower et al. (1986) of how writers think about their texts applies, we believe, equally to professorial readers: They

> compare the text *as they read it* to that set of intentions and criteria *which they represent to themselves*. And unfortunately this representation of intention is not a nicely-formed, idealized version of a text . . . Instead, it is likely to consist of 1) a unique network of goals and intentions . . . and 2) a vast set of standard and genre-specific tests and criteria for good writing already stored in . . . long term memory. (p. 29)

In other words, cognitive reading theory predicts that this variation in individual responses to particular sentences and errors is inevitable. We hypothesize that every teacher may have a personal mental stylistic manual that is based on and broadly agrees with social and professional norms but that contains idiosyncratic preferences. Our results suggest that teachers do not distinguish between such preferences and the social norms as defined by such guides as *The St. Martin's Handbook* or the handbook that is now institutionalized on this campus, Diana Hacker's *Bedford Handbook for Writers*.

Implications

Implications for Teaching. Teachers must clearly communicate their expectations about grammar and style to students. This communication is essential for three reasons.

1) The existence of a cross-disciplinary agreement about a hierarchy of error means that students

need to know that these errors count against them in all of the college writing that they do.

2) The lack of agreement about standards of correctness means that we owe it to our students to tell them what we as individual teachers consider correct.

3) The lack of accuracy in doing the survey means that we should perhaps express our judgments about correctness with a bit of humility.

On the other hand, students must accept that different writing contexts evoke broadly similar but by no means identical expectations. But they cannot learn this lesson unless we teach it to them by telling them clearly what we expect.

Implications for Writing and Research. We plan to extend this study by replicating it with employers. We want to learn whether the cross-disciplinary consensus about error extends beyond the boundaries of this campus and whether nonacademics place the same relative importance on errors as we do. In pursuit of this study, we expect to be contacting various offices on campus for names of area employers, especially businesses that employ CMSU graduates. We also think that it might be worthwhile for individual departments, as part of their CPI work, to survey their alumni about their current attitudes toward writing, how their attitudes about writing have changed since graduation, and their satisfaction with the training in writing that they received here.

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LIST OF APPENDICES, TABLES, AND FIGURES

Appendix A: Copy of the Survey Instrument, with Instructions and Demographic Form.

Appendix B: Categories of Errors Studied, Listed in Order from Most to Least Bothersome, with Mean Score and an Example.

Table 1: Demographic groups ranked by mean irritation scores.

Table 2: Overlooks and "misdiagnoses," arranged by demographic groups.

Figure 1. X-Y axis showing average response to each error category, contrasted with the total number of zeroes (overlooks) for each category, including OK sentences.

Figure 2. Spearman rank correlations for error rating among English, Educational Development, and all other faculty.

Figure 3. Responses to the error categories factored by four academic "disciplines".

Figure 4. Responses to the error categories factored by gender.

Figure 5. Responses to the error categories factored by academic rank.

Figure 6. Responses to the error categories factored by amount of writing seen per semester.

Appendix A

Copy of the Survey Instrument, with Instructions and Demographic Form

Attached is a list of 78 sentences, most of them written in Fall 92 by Central students. (In fairness to the writing abilities of our students, we should say that it took us several weeks to collect these errors.) Most of the sentences contain particular errors that we have reason to believe are either very common or highly bothersome to readers. We would like you please to rate these sentences on a Likert scale of 0 - 6, according to whether an error is present and, if so, how bothersome you find it.

Please read through each sentence rather quickly and mark your response to it. We do not want to know if you would write it as it appears in the questionnaire, but only if finding the sentence in someone else's writing would bother you. Please respond to these sentences candidly, without thinking that two judgmental English professors are looking over your shoulder. We hope you will respond to these sentences as naturally and realistically as you would if they occurred in routine student writing.

Rating Scale
0 = no error, i.e., The sentence is correct.
1 = An error is present but doesn't bother me.
2 = The error bothers me a little.
3 = The error bothers me somewhat.
4 = The error bothers me.
5 = The error bothers me a lot.
6 = The error REALLY bothers me.

Example: If I was a member of Congress, I would vote for that bill.
0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Each "error" sentence contains only one error. We have not marked the errors. You are welcome to mark any errors that you see if doing so will help you complete the survey; that's your choice, and we will not be looking at such markings.

Thank you for your cooperation. We promise to publicize the results of the survey on campus.

Sincerely,
Bob Yates and Peggy Kantz
Please return your surveys to us at MAR 336E.

Demographic Data (circle 1 item in each list)
Your age: under 30 30-34 35-39 40-44 45-49 50-54 55-59 60+
Your academic rank: instructor assistant professor associate professor
full professor other
Your gender: male female
Your years of teaching at the college level: 0 - 2 3 - 5 6 - 10
11 - 15 16 - 20 21 - 25 26 - 30 31 - 35 36+
Your college (check 1): _____Applied Sciences & Technology
_____Arts & Sciences
_____Business & Economics
_____Education & Human Services
_____Educational Development Center
_____other
Your department (fill in the blank):_____
Do you normally see much student writing during a semester? (Check as many as apply and fill in the blanks.)
_____no, I see little or no student writing in an average semester.
_____short answer exercises? If so, how many?_____
_____short answer tests? If so, how many?_____
_____essay exams? If so, how many?
_____journals or lab reports? If so, how many?_____
_____papers of fewer than 10 pages? If so, how many?_____
_____papers of more than 10 pages? If so, how many? _____
_____other writing not listed? If so, describe briefly:

1. My sorority looks for sisters who will be loyal, responsible and who will carry themselves with dignity.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
2. If you observe one of the concert choir's classes you will see the hard work that the students and instructor put in their practicing.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
3. In order to recycle your cans, bottles, and paper, keep them in seperate bags.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
4. We could of run to breakfast faster than the bus got us there.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
5. The family and home is important in making this country a wonderful place to live.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
6. I always knew teachers were influential in their students lives, but I didn't realize to what extent.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
7. Yesterday, the person that always rides with me to school was not ready on time.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
8. I'm in college now, that is perhaps the greatest change I have ever made.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
9. If you take away our right to choose, that will take away the adventure of learning, and students will loose the desire to achieve and to excel in school and in life.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
10. I haven't wrote all summer, and my mind needs to get back into the writing mood.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
11. I'm not saying that you're child definitely suffers from this phobia, just that it's a possibility.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
12. Seventy years ago, Americans speculated in Florida real estate as though it were a risk-free investment.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
13. He felt dizzy and a little nauseous he thought it was the flu.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
14. Sometimes its months before anyone takes the time to play the neglected piano.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
15. As I want protection from the pain and struggles of life, the shoe wants protection from wear and tear. Both me and the shoe require this care in order to serve our masters.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
16. This imaginary stone is large and round, much like me, and had always been curious about the sea.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
17. Suggestions give me a place to start. First by following suggestions, if they truly fit my paper.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
18. My sources suggested using tinted overlays on text but I modified the technique for use with the overhead projector.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
19. An ordinary kid would come home from school every day and throw themselves in front of the TV.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
20. The English teacher on the other hand commented mainly on spelling and common grammatical errors.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
21. Not many people know about the Fashion Business Association, so they advertise the group in a couple of ways.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6
22. The two drivers involved in the accident, who have both been convicted of drunk driving, should lose their licenses.
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6

23. My high school French club had a tremendous affect on my plans for my future.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
24. Learning to write enterprises a great deal of time, interest, intellect, style, and ability.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
25. Being a nonmember, they allowed me to attend one of their meetings, and I was quite surprised.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
26. Their are two patients in our support group who got hepatitis in Vietnam through blood transfusions.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
27. I never really took the time just too sit and observe.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
28. By learning to enjoy writing, stress can be eliminated when it's time for students to do term papers, reports, and essays for other classes.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
29. If your not determined to work and practice, then your not going to get anywhere.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
30. Eagles are naturally independent creatures. Although there are times when they do need help and it is taken with appreciation.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
31. I think that sometimes taxes are made into a bigger deal than it really is.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
32. With pens poised in anticipation, the students waited for the test to be distributed.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
33. I feel I need to build alot of endurance to make it through college.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
34. I would like to read others essays so I know how mine compares with theirs.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
35. When I joined the cheerleading squad, most of the cheers and chants were sang.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
36. It was a place were my big brother and I could spend hours teasing and talking to each other.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
37. The article also cites that children with dyslexia usually begin to speak late and cannot read aloud.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
38. History is said to repeat itself therefore a person should be aware of what has happened.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
39. I have weaknesses in the area of finding the right words for what I want to say. It ends up confusing and hard for readers to understand.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
40. In Missouri, coaches recieve stipends ranging from $500 to $2000 per year.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
41. Some of the authors I studied gave suggestions on how to define the problem and others discussed how to handle it.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
42. When one network comes up with an idea like Beverly Hills 90210 which came out first, then other networks follow with similar programs.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
43. We are inundated with so much information, so many facts, so much to ponder and then having to decide for ourselves, "Is this what I need?"
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6

44. An important nineteenth-century sociologist was Karl Marx, who believed that his role as social thinker was to change the world.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
45. Jim told most of the stories, as you might of expected.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
46. However he is more particular about his women than he is about his food.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
47. I, as the English teacher, more than likely enjoys reading Shakespeare.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
48. In the end, his dad and him became closer.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
49. You can take care of your body by lifting weights, running, and most definately by not taking drugs.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
50. Whenever I see those people, the nickname "Red Undies" seemed to escape from their mouths.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
51. Both kinds of comments sound okay to me, one just asks a rhetorical question and the other makes a rhetorical statement.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
52. The sun and rain represent my parents and other loved ones which have influenced my life.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
53. Some of the problems I'm having is being descriptive.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
54. The mare was loosing a lot of blood and struggling badly.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
55. It's once flawless complexion is now a muddy brown color.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
56. There are many people who fear success because they fear they do not deserve it.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
57. The blood used for your transfusion must not of been checked well enough.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
58. Other parts of nature, such as the storms that come along, also effect my survival.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
59. The girl talked about how her and her friends would go out and steal things.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
60. The image that best represents myself is a gigantic boulder blocking a small roadway.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
61. Mike Rose's, *Lives on the Boundary*, finds a middle ground but still gets its message across.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
62. Less inhibited students would enjoy the opportunity to intertwine with the instructors.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
63. By being told what's incorrect in their compositions, the teacher may give a wrong direction to the writers.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
64. Instead of just taking out words the student might choose a different approach to the paper.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
65. Television is needed in todays society to enable people to learn about issues of fiction and nonfiction.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
66. The job demands that the employee be in top physical condition.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6

67. I know that the problems are not entirely the teachers' fault, but they definitely could have helped a great deal.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
68. No explanation as to why one phrase sounds better than the other, leading me to guess that grading is just subjective.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
69. The topics are good they cover a lot of controversial issues.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
70. Students should tap into there teachers' knowledge and expertise.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
71. I learned that dyslexic students are sensitive about their disability so it is important to assist them in the regular classroom without the rest of the class noticing.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
72. This professor acted as a caring professional who is looking for the best interest of the student.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
73. Once in a while I receive a paper with a poor grade and very few comments justifying the grade, this is very frustrating when I have felt confident about the quality of the work.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
74. Every instructor has their own way of grading.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
75. My goals include maintaining a G.P.A. in the 3.0 range and to try to be happy with my life.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
76. I felt these remarks to be to general to give me a better understanding of ways to improve my writing abilities.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
77. These movies seemed to be reran over and over.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6
78. The girls at my lunch table said condoms where the best kind of protection.
    0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Appendix B

Categories of Errors Studied, Listed in Order from Most to Least Bothersome, with Mean Score and an Example

Rank	Category	Mean Irritation Score
1.	nonstandard verb forms	4.5
	These movies seemed to be reran over and over.	
2.	you're/your	4.4
	I'm not saying that you're child definitely suffers from this phobia, just that it's a possibility.	
3.	their/there	4.3
	Students should tap into there teachers' knowledge and expertise.	
4.	sentence fragment	4.3
	No explanation as to why one phrase sounds better than the other, leading me to guess that grading is just subjective.	
5.	subject-verb agreement	4.2
	The family and home is important in making this country a wonderful place to live.	
6.	wrong preposition in verb phrase	4.2
	We could of run to breakfast faster than the bus got us there.	
7.	too/to	4.2
	I felt these remarks to be to general to give me a better understanding of ways to improve my writing abilities.	
8.	were/where	4.2
	It was a place were my big brother and I could spend hours teasing and talking to each other.	
9.	pronoun agreement	4.1
	An ordinary kid would come home from school every day and throw themselves in front of the TV.	
10.	object pronouns as subjects	4.0
	The girl talked about how her and her friends would go out and steal things.	
11.	run-on sentences	4.0
	The topics are good they cover a lot of controversial issues.	
12.	definitely (definately)	3.8
	You can take care of your body by lifting weights, running, and most definately by not taking drugs.	
13.	tense shift	3.7
	This imaginary stone is large and round, much like me, and had always wondered about the sea.	
14.	it's/its	3.7
	It's once flawless complexion is now a muddy brown color.	
15.	lose/loose	3.6
	The mare was loosing a lot of blood and struggling badly.	
16.	wrong word	3.6
	The article also cites that children with dyslexia usually begin to speak late and cannot read aloud.	
17.	dangling modifier	3.5
	By being told what's incorrect in their compositions, the teacher may give a wrong direction to the writers.	
18.	comma splice	3.5
	I'm in college now, that is perhaps the greatest change I have ever made.	
19.	affect/effect	3.5
	My high school French club had a tremendous affect on my plans for my future.	
20.	non-parallel order	3.5
	My goals include maintaining a G.P.A. in the 3.0 range and to try to be happy with my life.	

(table continues)

Rank	Category	Mean Irritation Score
21.	vague pronoun reference	3.5
	I have weaknesses in the area of finding the right words for what I want to say. It ends up confusing and hard for readers to understand.	
22.	a lot (alot)	3.3
	I feel I need to build alot of endurance to make it through college.	
23.	receive (recieve)	3.3
	In Missouri, coaches recieve stipends ranging from $500 to $2000 per year.	
24.	separate (seperate)	3.3
	In order to recycle your cans, bottles, and paper, keep them in seperate bags.	
25.	incorrect relative pronoun	3.3
	Yesterday, the person that always rides with me to school was not ready on time.	
26.	apostrophe used as a possessive	3.2
	Television is needed in todays society to enable people to learn about issues of fiction and non-fiction.	
27.	incorrect commas with parenthetical or nonrestrictive element	3.2
	Mike Rose's, *Lives on the Boundary*, finds a middle ground but still gets its message across.	
28.	OK sentence #5	3.0
	The two drivers involved in the accident, who have both been convicted of drunken driving, should lose their licenses. (correctly punctuated restrictive clause)	
29.	no comma in compound sentence	2.8
	My sources suggested using tented overlays on text but I modified the technique for use with the overhead projector.	
30.	OK sentence #2	2.8
	Seventy years ago, Americans speculated in Florida real estate as though it were a risk-free investment. (correct use of subjunctive tense)	
31.	OK sentence #3	2.8
	The job demands that the employee be in top physical condition. (correct use of subjunctive mood)	
32.	OK sentence #4	2.7
	An important nineteen-century sociologist was Karl Marx, who believed that his role as a social thinker was to change the world. (correctly punctuated dependent clause)	
33.	no comma in introductory element	2.7
	Instead of just taking out words the student might choose a different approach to the paper.	
34.	OK sentence #1	2.3
	There are many people who fear success because they fear they do not deserve it. (correct--or at least acceptable--use of "there" as an expletive)	
35.	OK sentence #6	2.1
	With pens poised in anticipation, the students waited for the test to be distributed. (correctly punctuated introductory phrase)	

Table 1: Demographic Groups Ranked by Average Irritation Score

Average	Group	Number in Group
4.06	Business faculty	28
3.93	31+ years of teaching	10
3.9	under 30 years of age	8
3.9	Full Professors	48
3.88	women	42
3.87	11 - 20 years of teaching	42
3.83	see a lot of writing	29
3.82	Hard Science faculty	16
3.78	40 - 49 years of age	38
3.77	Assistant Professors	34
3.71	30 - 39 years of age	24
3.71	3 - 10 years of teaching	35
3.7	50 - 59 years of age	51
3.67	see little writing	80
3.63	21 - 30 years of teaching	41
3.63	see some writing	34
3.61	men	101
3.6	Instructors	27
3.6	Liberal Arts faculty	68
3.48	over 60 years of age	22
3.45	Associate Professors	27
3.35	Vocational Technology faculty	31
3.22	0 - 2 years of teaching	14
3.12	not having faculty rank	6

Table 2: Overlooks and Misdiagnoses Across Demographic Categories

Group		% Overlooks				% Misdiagnoses				
Average	n*	none	low	some	many	none	low	some	many	X
Gender										
women	39	20.5	48.5	25.6	5.1	0	28.2	30.8	4.1	3.88
men	93	5.4	52.7	26.9	15.1	0	16.1	30.1	53.9	3.61
Age										
under 30	8	12.5	12.5	37.5	37.5	0	25.0	37.5	37.5	3.90
aged 30 - 39	22	4.5	50.0	36.4	9.1	0	27.1	18.2	54.5	3.71
aged 40 - 49	33	12.1	45.5	30.3	12.1	0	15.2	36.4	48.5	3.78
aged 50 - 59	48	10.4	58.3	22.9	8.3	0	18.7	29.2	52.1	3.70
over 60	21	9.5	57.1	19.0	14.3	0	19.0	33.3	47.6	3.48
Years of Teaching										
0 -2 yrs.	14	7.1	28.6	28.6	35.7	0	14.3	28.6	57.1	3.22
3 - 10 yrs.	32	6.3	53.1	31.3	9.4	0	15.6	40.6	43.8	3.71
11 - 20 yrs.	39	17.9	43.6	25.6	12.8	0	25.6	23.1	51.3	3.87
21 - 30 yrs.	37	8.1	56.8	29.7	5.4	0	24.3	24.3	51.4	3.63
31 + yrs.	9	0	88.9	11.1	0	0	0	44.4	55.6	3.93
Rank										
Instructor	26	11.1	53.8	19.2	15.4	0	19.2	38.5	42.3	3.60
Assistant	33	12.1	45.5	30.3	12.1	0	27.3	21.2	51.5	3.77
Associate	23	8.7	39.1	43.5	8.7	0	26.1	26.1	47.8	3.45
Full Prof	45	8.9	62.2	20.0	8.9	0	13.3	33.3	53.3	3.90
Non-faculty	4	0	50.0	0	50.0	0	0	50.0	50.0	3.12
Amt. of Writing Assigned										
little writing	72	9.7	48.6	26.4	15.3	0	11.1	30.6	58.3	3.67
some writing	32	3.1	56.3	28.1	12.5	0	15.6	28.1	56.3	3.63
much writing	28	17.9	53.6	25.0	3.6	0	37.5	37.5	25.0	3.83
Academic Discipline										
Business	25	16.0	44.0	16.0	24.0	0	8.0	40.0	52.0	4.06
Liberal Arts	59	10.2	52.5	27.1	10.2	0	30.5	28.8	40.7	3.60
Hrd Sciences	12	0	75.0	0	25.0	0	25.0	25.0	50.0	3.82
Voc Tech	29	3.4	37.9	55.2	3.4	0	3.4	24.1	72.4	3.35

*The n's are smaller for this data than for other data sets because some respondents sent back blank pages, or responded to sentences as containing an error without indicating what the error was. Those data forms were not used for this analysis.

Handbooks and Variation in Agreement

-- *Terry Lynn Irons*

1. Introduction

In her pioneering work *Errors and Expectations*, the late Mina Shaugnessy writes, "The filament that links subjects to predicates in formal English is number" (1977: 14). Deriving from the noble tradition initiated by Bishop Lowth and perpetuated by Webster and others, this relation is commonly treated under the heading of agreement. Indeed, rules for agreement abound in contemporary teaching grammars of English:

> SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT
> A verb must agree in number with its subject.
> *Macmillan Handbook of English*

> SUBJECT/VERB AGREEMENT
> The predicate verb should agree in number with its subject.
> *The Little Rhetoric & Handbook*

> AGREEMENT
> Make a verb agree in number with its subject; make a pronoun agree in number with its antecedent.
> *Harbrace College Handbook*

With little ado, about something, each of these grammars zeroes in on areas of uncertainty, special cases (certain syntactic configurations and lexical items), in which, for some reason or other, the exact number of the subject is not clear. Typically,

these grammars then proceed with sets of rules to govern these special cases. For example, *The Macmillan Handbook of English* instructs us that "After *each, every, each one, everyone, everybody, anybody, nobody, none, either,* and *neither* the singular verb is used in formal English" (1977: 248).[1] We conclude, then, that "None of the students is prepared for the test because none has a book" is proper, whereas "None of the students are prepared for the test because none have books" is not. (Of course, neither one is proper--students should have books and be prepared for tests!)

All of these so-called rules aside, the interesting question is, what do people, real speakers, actually do when it comes to these special cases of agreement. Moreover, what implications does their behavior have for the nature of this so-called 'filament' that is said to link 'subjects to predicates in formal English'? The present study represents one attempt to answer these questions.

2. Method

A basic method for the study of human language behavior is to assemble a corpus of actual natural language expressions and base an analysis thereon. For a variety of reasons, this approach faces several problems, not the least of which is the selection process--what to include, what to exclude. Additionally, some constructions occur with such infrequency that the task of gathering a corpus of sufficient size upon which to make any valid observations becomes insurmountable. Finally, the fact that certain constructions do not occur within an observed set does not entail that these constructions are not possible.

To sidestep these problems (and perhaps to introduce others), the basis for this study is a forced choice test consisting of 25 items representing seven classes or types of special agreement constructions: (a) *there* existentials; (b) partitive constructions (*all of, each of, none of*); (c) collective nouns; (d) disjunctive constructions; (e) intruding phrases; (f) equative constructions (linking verb--predicate nominative); and (g) *one of X who* constructions. A copy of the test may be found in an appendix.

A total of 118 subjects have participated in the test, 59 male and 59 female. Approximately 26% (31) of the subjects are college and university teachers. The remaining 74% (87) are undergraduate students that were enrolled in writing and/or linguistics courses at a private college in Georgia and a state university in Kentucky. Subjects ranged in age from 18 to 65.

The raw results of the test have been encoded as data files suitable as input for the variable rule software package know as Varbrul. The programs in this package have been used to carry out the statistical analysis of results reported below.

3. Findings

A prevailing linguistic stereotype is that women are more careful in their grammar and speech than are men. Contrary to what might be expected, then, the results show few significant differences in response along the female/male axis. It is only responses to item three, All of my family (is/are) present, and item seventeen, The boy, not his parents, (is/are) being punished, that show a slight level of significance in terms of the sex variable. The probability that the variable female influences outcomes in these two items, as estimated using maximum likelihood procedures, is .61 and .63, respectively, with the probability that the variable male influences outcomes being .39 and .37. (The estimation procedure used determines likelihood of the outcome based on frequency values. The procedure uses a p/(1-p) formula. In this case, values approaching .5 from either side cancel out, with values at either extreme being significant. The thresholds are .6 and .4.) Although there may be differences between the speech of men and women in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax, and speech acts, it appears that the grammar of agreement is not a sex-marked rule in the grammar of English.

The most significant finding of the study is that there are extremely significant differences in response in terms of the variable of age. Using a broad cut off of above 30 and below 30, (which does not correlate exactly with the distinction between teacher and student: many of the teachers are below 30 and many of the students in the sample are above 30), the probability that age influences the outcome of agreement is greater than the threshold of significance in a total of 17 out of the 25 test items. Items of particular note involve collective nouns, partitive constructions, and *one of X who* constructions.

Test items four and nine both contain the collective noun *majority*. As illustrated in Table A, responses show a significant difference in the interpretation of *majority*. In four, a slim majority interpret *majority* as singular, whereas in nine, a large majority interprets *majority* as plural. It may be that the difference between *votes* and *Democrats* accounts for the difference, though it may also be a function of the difference in voice--four is passive and nine is not. In all likelihood, however, the difference in response may be attributed to the difference in articles: four uses the indefinite *a*, which derives historically from the singular one, whereas nine features the definite article.

4. A majority of votes (is/are) needed to win.

Singular	Plural
64	54
54%	46%

9. The majority of Democrats (is/are) opposed to local blackouts of Game of the Week.

Singular	Plural
27	91
23%	77%

TABLE A: Items 4 and 9, Majority of

The responses are particularly interesting when correlated with the variable of age. As illustrated in Table B, in four, an overwhelming majority of the over 30 crowd prefer the singular interpretation, whereas a significant majority of those under 30 opt for the plural interpretation. In nine, those over 30 are split 50/50, with the youngsters favoring the plural 9-1.

		Singular	Plural
4.	> 30	31	5
		86%	14%
	< 30	33	49
		40%	60%
9.	> 30	18	18
		50%	50%
	< 30	9	73
		11%	89%

Table B: Age Variable, Items 4 & 9

It is interesting and important to note that the kiddies favor the plural interpretation in both cases. This result strongly implies a generational shift in the interpretation of *majority*, toward plurality. The notion of such a generational shift toward plurality is corroborated in the increasing of other constructions

by younger writers, e.g., *everyone brought their rifles.*

A similar pattern of shift is observed in test item nineteen, involving the interpretation of *each.* Handbooks suggest the proper number interpretation for *each* in item nineteen is singular. As shown in Table C, that interpretation

19. Each of his examples (was/were) out of context.

	Singular	Plural
> 30	33	3
	92%	8%
< 30	25	57
	30%	70%
Total	58	60
	49%	51%

Table C: Item 19, Each of

is favored by those over 30, whereas those under 30 lean heavily toward the plural form *were.* I must admit shamefully that the plural interpretation makes more sense to me semantically. For in this construction, *each* is not used to partition a group, as in *some of the fabric*; rather the sense is one of quantification over the entire set. It has the reading of "All examples," which is clearly plural.

Examples involving the *none of* construction suggest a similar pattern of generational difference or change. As shown

1. None of those firemen (enjoys/enjoy) hearing the alarm go off.

	Singular	Plural
> 30	25	11
	69%	31%
< 30	10	72
	12%	88%
Total	35	83
	30%	70%

Table D: Item 1, None of

in Table D, the plural response is preferred to the singular response in test item one in a ratio of 7-3 overall. Those over 30, however, opt for the singular over the plural in nearly the same ratio of 7-3, while the youth select the plural over the singular at an even greater ratio of almost 9-1. This result is consistent with the pattern of response to test item seven, presented in Table E. In this case the probability that

7. None of the costumes he has tried (fit/fits) him.

	Singular	Plural
> 30	31	5
	86%	14%
< 30	32	50
	39%	61%
Total	63	55
	53%	47%

Table E: Item 7, None of

being over 30 influences the outcome is weighted at .85, while the probability that being under 30 influences the outcome is weighted at .32 (The specific outcome tested here is the singular response, which handbooks laud; testing for the plural outcomes gives mirror weightings in reverse.)

Finally, two items are worthy of note because an overwhelming majority of subjects opt for a response different from that dictated by handbook rules, regardless of age. These items, numbers fifteen and twenty-four, each contain a *one of X who* phrase, and handbooks generally state that the relative clause marker *who/that* derives its number from its antecedent *X*, not *one.* In test item fifteen, the antecedent for *that* is *students*, which is clearly plural. In this case the modifier *best* restrictively requires the relative clause to define exactly the class of "best students" of which "he" is a member. Which best students? The ones who have ever come to this school. The appropriate verb form is, therefore, the plural *have.* Yet, as indicated by the results in Table F, the test subjects overwhelmingly attach the relative

15. He is one of the best students that (has/have) ever come to this school.

	Singular	Plural
> 30	25	11
	69%	31%
< 30	77	5

	94%	6%
Total	102	16
	86%	14%

Table F: Item 15, One of X that

clause to *one*, as indicated by the high percentage of singular responses. It is comforting to this member of the over 30 crowd to see that at least a greater percentage of the older folk, while yet in the minority, select the correct response.

In test item twenty-four, the antecedent of *who* is clearly *rare individuals*, which is plural. Without the interpretation of

24. Jack is one of those rare individuals who (has/have) decided on a definite career.

	Singular	Plural
>30	29	7
	81%	19%
<30	72	10
	88%	12%
Total	101	17
	86%	14%

Table G: Item 24, One of X who

who as attaching to *rare individuals*, there is, in point of fact, no complete definition of who the set of rare individuals of which Jack is a member is. Attaching *who* to *one* leaves us with a very incomplete definition of the class of which Jack is a member. Yet the results of this study, represented in Table G, show that this latter choice is the one most frequently made.

It must be the case that conditions and constraints on linear processing in language production are at play in these latter cases. It is certainly a phenomenon worthy of further future study, the question being one of devising an appropriate method of investigation.

4. Conclusion

The results of the study suggest that subject-verb number agreement in present-day English is inherently variable and may be undergoing change. This finding has significant theoretical and pedagogical implications. In terms of grammatical theory, the question to be answered is one of whether the variation is a consequent of the grammar of language, the process of production and performance, or conscious stylistic decisions on the part of speakers. It is hardly likely that the grammar of any language contains principles that operate variably, but it may be the case that there is variation in the setting of the agreement parameter among a group of speakers of some language. Specifically, it may be the case that English is undergoing a generational shift or change in the setting of that parameter with respect to certain lexical items and syntactic configurations.

The final concern is one of pedagogy. What do we, as teachers of writing and of future teachers of writing and language arts, do in the classroom when it comes to matters of agreement? The use of agreement markers in certain cases is clearly a social class marker in English, as a conscious stylistic choice. In this case, we may wish to explore the notion of grammar as style with our students, as we prepare them for the realities of economic life in America. If, however, agreement is inherently variable and is undergoing change, then I suggest we do nothing other than observe and describe. To do else is to set ourselves up as the authority in language, which we are not nor should we hope to be.

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[1] As is not uncommon, other handbooks take exception to the rule as stated in this handbook. *Harbrace*, for instance, states this rule as follows: "When used as subjects, such words as *each*, *either*, *one*, *everybody*, and *anyone* take singular verbs. *All*, *any*, *some*, and *none* may take either a singular or a plural verb" (1994: 68). With the last set of quantifiers, according to *Harbrace*, "the context generally determines the choice of the verb form" (1994: 69). In fact, *Macmillan* admits that "the *intention* of the writer determines the choice of the verb form" (1977: 249). Thus, context or intention may allow that "none are/none have" is appropriate, yet *Macmillan* holds that such usage is 'informal'. *The Little Rhetoric & Handbook* makes the best distinctions here: "If the **of** phrase following the pronoun specifies a *mass* or *bulk* of something, the pronoun is singular; if the **of** phrase specifies a *number of things or persons*, the pronoun is plural" (1977: 373). But there are exceptions even to this. When is a rule no longer a rule?

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Appendix A
Survey on Usage

Sex: M F Age: <18 18-20 21-25 25-30 >30

Where are you from?_____
How long has your family lived there?_____
Level of Education:_____

Write in the blank the verb form that you would usually use, not necessarily the one that follows a schoolbook rule.

1. (enjoy/enjoys) None of those firemen _____ hearing the alarm go off.
2. (favors/favor) I am one of those who _____ equal rights.
3. (are/is) All of my family _____ present.
4. (are/is) A majority of votes _____ needed to win.
5. (has/have) Neither of them ___ enough money to afford a car.
6. (runs/run) Every one of those athletes _____ the mile in four minutes.
7. (fits/fit) None of the costumes he has tried _____ him.
8. (is/are) There ____ two boys and a girl in the room.
9. (is/are) The majority of Democrats ____ opposed to local blackouts of Game of the Week.
10. (were/was) Either your eyesight or your brakes ___ at fault.
11. (is/are) All my family _____ present.
12. (has/have) Either the professor or her assistants _____ to explain the lesson.
13. (are/is) What we need ____ more parking spaces.
14. (likes/like) Neither the student nor the teacher _____ that textbook.
15. (have/has) He is one of the best students that _____ ever come to this school.
16. (were/was) The major cause of highway accidents in 1976 _____ drunk drivers.
17. (are/is) The boy, not his parents, ____ being punished.
18. (is/are/am) Neither you nor I ____ trained for that job.
19. (were/was) Each of his examples _____ out of context.
20. (were/was) Neither you nor he ____ able to answer the question.
21. (are/is) There ____ a girl and two boys looking for you.
22. (plans/plan) Peter, along with his three brothers, _____ to open a store.
23. (is/are) Neither of them ____ ready for marriage.
24. (has/have) Jack is one of those rare individuals who _____ decided on a definite career.
25. (are/is) Either of the stories _____ going to be acceptable.

Unabashed Notes on the "G-word": Grammar in the Classroom

-- *John Horlivy*
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[Editor's Note: The following is reprinted from *CLASSROOMStoday* (Winter 1994), a publication of the University School of Milwaukee. In giving his permission for reprinting, Mr. Horlivy commented: "I found 'Unabashed Notes' useful in showing our parents how generative methods of instruction in grammar and rhetoric relate directly to helping students write with increased sophistication and flexibility."]

I have a startling price of "inside" information about the majority of today's teachers of English: they are embarrassed about something, about a particular body of knowledge that they wish would disappear but which swirls about them and tends to stick to them, like burrs tot heir cuffs and hems. They are so troubled by this annoyance that they are disinclined to talk about it among themselves, much less with their students, or with you, their students' parents.

I'm referring to what one wag has called "the g-word," the word which denotes the body of knowledge we can use to describe the manner in which these very sentences cohere and generate meaning. I am referring, of course, to the word "grammar."

In these paragraphs I will describe briefly how it happened that grammar fell so low in American schools. I will then move on to my primary goal: to demonstrate how grammar still holds an important position in USM's English curriculum by describing some of the positive effects teachers are achieving with instruction in syntax and traditional grammar.

Prior to the early 1960s, most students studied grammar using drill books. Then in 1963 a defining moment occurred in the English teaching profession. Richard Braddock et al. summarized and assessed studies on the effects of grammar instruction, concluding with this now-famous sentence:

> In view of the widespread agreement of research studies based upon many types of students and teachers, the conclusion can be stated in strong and unqualified terms: the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction in practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing. (37-38)

A second researcher, George Hillocks, using sophisticated statistical meta-analysis techniques, concluded, similarly, that the study of traditional school grammar "has no effect on raising the quality of student writing" and that, taught with certain methodologies, "grammar and mechanics instruction has a deleterious effect on student writing." (248-49) It seemed to be all over for grammar instruction, a body of knowledge now effectively tainted by descriptors like "negligible," "harmful," and "deleterious." Teachers found the anti-grammar arguments persuasive and, as a consequence, placed increased emphasis upon teaching the writing process, achieving, all of us agree, widespread efficacious results. In the process, however, grammar suffered neglect in the classrooms.

Even though the teaching of traditional grammar on the national scene during the past thirty years has languished in pedagogical eclipse, it perdures in USM's Upper School, entering most students' lives during the proofreading stage of essay writing. Using the terminology of traditional grammar, students confer with their assigned English teachers or with English instructors in the Writing Lab about questions of standard English usage and stylistic effectiveness.

But some English instructors go one step further. They teach traditional grammar as an integral component of generative rhetoric, a pedagogical strategy devised by Francis Christensen for teaching sentence style. Although Christensen's rhetoric still enjoys scholarly attention, it is not widely used in classrooms -- mainly because no useful texts based upon its concepts are currently available. Those of us who use generative rhetoric devise our own materials.

Christensen observed that successful writers know -- consciously or unconsciously -- how to manipulate the central elements of a commonly-used sentence design called the cumulative sentence. This

type of sentence consists of a main clause, which Christensen called the "base clause," to which the writer adds one or more non-restrictive modifiers, which he labeled "free modifiers" -- because they are somewhat free to move to various locations within a sentence. Constructing a sentence, Christensen suggested, can be viewed as an additive, or cumulative process.

USM juniors Sara Yagobian and Briana Doerr in a classroom exercise cooperatively wrote the following cumulative sentence, consciously placing three free modifiers immediately after the main clause, including within their sentence, as well, the vocabulary word-of-the-day, "coalesce":

> Two students coalesced their thoughts into one sentence, using the vocabulary word properly, taking their time to include every detail, the finished product being a masterpiece.

By consciously practicing their skills in managing (or "playing") with syntactic structures, such as the two participial phrases and the absolute phrase in the sentence above, these writers found themselves placed in a circumstance designed to enhance their self-confidence as writers. They were invited to learn, discursively or intuitively, how effective, well-designed sentences are structured. In the sentence presented above, they demonstrated their syntactic skills by opening with a brief, simple statement of their basic idea (two students working together on a sentence) and following it with a series of free modifiers which add, successively and cumulatively, layers of new detail in developing effectively the main idea of the sentence.

One carefully crafted sentence does not an effective writer (or a team of writers) make, but the late Francis Christensen would, no doubt, have found merit in the sentence written by Sarah and Briana, for he believed that "[a] mature style will have a high frequency of free modifiers, especially in the final position." The students' sentence presents nine words in its base clause, but 18 words within the three free modifiers placed after that base clause. (Although we also teach other sentence designs -- including the simple sentence, the compound sentence, and the balanced sentence -- we give the more frequently-used cumulative sentence primary attention.)

The classroom methodology is simple. Each day the student is challenged to combine his or her knowledge of the daily vocabulary word in a sentence that includes a special structure or strategy of generative rhetoric. During a recent class period, Devanand Manoli '95 placed the word "swarthy" within a free appositive phrase and included several additional free modifiers to lend narrative panache to his sentence:

> After the flash of brilliant light, which gave birth to an enormous display of color and beauty, the Indian sorcerer, a swarthy figure, within whom there lay a vast reservoir of power, emerged from the majestic plumes of smoke.

Erika Krause '95 combined the vocabulary word "aspersion" with three adverbial free modifiers that established the ingredients of a micro-narrative charged with dramatic irony:

> As I sat in the courtroom, he cast multiple aspersions upon me, lying foolishly, not knowing of my irrefutable evidence against him.

These two sentences are particularly well-crafted, especially when one considers that the writers had only a few minutes in which to write them.

Not every student achieves noteworthy success each day, but as the school year progresses, the sentences become more and more interesting because of their increased sophistication. It seems that the daily exercise constitutes a happy balance between creativity, on the one hand, and conscious application of sound rhetorical concepts, on the other. Although we introduce such novel terms as "levels of generality," "direction of modification," and "coordinate patterns of development," we still employ, of necessity, the terminology of traditional English grammar, and because of the salutary results we get from our students, we do so with relish and enthusiasm.

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The Role of Grammar in the Teaching of Writing to ESL College Students

-- Ru Zhang

More and more ESL (English as a Second Language) students come to the United States for their college education every year. "Researchers estimate that by the year 2000, ESL students will make up more than 25% of the college student population; colleges in some large cities have already reached this percentage" (Belanoff et.al. 211). It is critical that ESL teachers provide them with the kind of language skills they need to be successful in college and their future career. Marianne Celce-Murica has said:

> There are currently two extreme positions in ESL concerning the teaching of English grammar. At one extreme, the proponents of audio-lingualism (Lado, 1964) and the methodologists such as Gattegno (1972, 1976) argue that we must make grammar the core of our language instruction and that we must correct all student errors. At the other extreme, methodologists such as Krashen and Terrell (1983) tell us not to teach grammar explicitly and not to correct any learner errors (Celce-Murica 4).

Celce-Murica's statement highlights the ongoing debate about grammar in ESL teaching and presents two extreme positions. We should not go to extremes. I have been teaching English as a foreign language in China for more than ten years, and I have been in a Master of Arts program in English for two semesters at Bradley University in Peoria, IL. Having been both an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher and an ESL student, I have developed a more definitive position about the role of English grammar in the teaching and learning of ESL. This paper focuses on whether traditional grammar should be taught to ESL students who come to the U.S. for higher education, and if so, what kind of traditional grammar should be taught and how.

Whether We Should Teach Grammar or Not

In reality, there are many different types of language learners and many different purposes for leaning ESL. Each teaching-learning context deserves its own answer to the question of whether grammar should be taught and what kind of grammar should be emphasized. There is a continuum along which grammar becomes increasingly more important or less important depending upon a number of learner variables and instructional variables that each ESL teacher must consider. The following chart by Marianne Celce-Murica (4) shows us a clear picture of the variables:

	Less Important—Focus on Form—More Important		
Learner Variables			
1. Age	children	adolescents	adults
2. Proficiency Level	beginning	intermediate	advanced
3. Educational Level	Pre-literate no formal education	semi-literate some formal education	literate well educated
Instructional Variables			
4. Skill	listening, reading	speaking	writing
5. Register	informal	consultative	formal
6. Need/use	survival communication	vocational	professional

The chart shows how much grammar should be taught at each level and age. According to the chart, ESL college students belong to the category of adults with formal English instruction, and their purpose is to enter professional careers after graduation. Whether each ESL student sees himself in this way or not, all ESL students applying to colleges in the United States have to have a TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) score of over 500 in order to be accepted; some colleges demand a 550 minimum. (TOEFL is a kind of English proficiency test including listening and reading comprehension and a short composition on a given topic). Such a score on TOEFL typically indicates that ESL students have learned English school grammar in their home countries. However, school grammar itself is far from enough to enable them to efficiently communicate both in written and

spoken English in America. (I will explain the relationship between grammar and communication later on). Generally speaking, this group of ESL students puts great value on education and their opportunity to study in the U.S.

Some people argue that ESL college students use English primarily for writing academic papers; teaching traditional grammar does not help their writing, so why should we bother to do that. Jean Sanborn tells us her personal experience in "Grammar: Good Wine Before Its Time" :

> I learned grammar then the way I 'learned' geometry, as a set of rules to be applied to given situations as assigned. In neither grammar nor geometry did I have the foggiest notion where the rules came from or how they worked. . . If grammar is never taught in the schools, I think little will be lost as long as students are using language widely and constantly (Sanborn 75).

Sanborn says that learning rigid rules of grammar without applying them to context is useless and she managed to become an English teacher without learning much grammar, so we should not teach grammar at all.

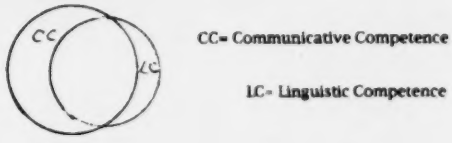
While I agree that learning rigid rules without applying them to context is not very helpful, Sanborn throws the baby out with the bath water. There IS something wrong with the way we teach grammar. A Short History of Writing Instruction edited by James Murphy states that our teaching methods are handed down from the Greeks and Romans. To elaborate Murphy's notion, although we have made some changes over the years, the basic teaching methods remain unchanged. In ancient Greece and Rome, grammar and language instruction were the core of education and ordinary people did not have access to education. Literary people purposely wrote the language in a way to show that they were more elite and smarter than common people. Today most people have access to higher education and the purpose of writing is communication, for making oneself understood. It is certain that just learning rigid rules will not help. The methods used in Roman schools will not work effectively for schools in the 1990s. We have to have a better way to teach grammar to meet today's communication needs.

When we talk about teaching ESL college students, we have to realize that the way adults learn a second language is quite different from the way we learn our native language while we are growing up, although both cases belong to one of Celce-Murica's language learning categories. Native language can serve both as a bridge and a block in foreign language learning. Robert Bley-Vroman maintains in "The Fundamental Character of Foreign Language Learning":

> Adult foreign language learners are equipped with a general Universal Grammar. They construct a kind of surrogate for Universal Grammar from knowledge of the native language. The native language must be sifted: that which is likely to be universal must be separated from that which is accidental property of the native language. (27)

Adult learners have ideas of what in their native language is universal and hence transferred to the language to be learned; and what is specific to the native language and hence would not transfer well. So the way an adult learns a foreign language is very different from how a child learns a native language. Grammar is one of the major ways for foreign language learners to enter the world of another language.

The basic purpose of learning a language is to be both communicative and grammatical in using the language. The following diagram will show us the relationship between the two:



> The diagram implies that some areas of linguistic competence are essentially irrelevant to communicative competence, but that, in general, linguistic competence is a part of communicative competence. This modified part-whole relationship implies, in turn, that teaching comprehensively for linguistic competence will necessarily leave a large area of communicative competence untouched, whereas teaching equally comprehensively for communicative competence will necessarily cater for all but a small part of linguistic competence. (Allwright 168)

I equate linguistic competence with grammatical competence for ESL college students. (I will explain grammatical competence later). I look at the diagram in this way: grammatical competence falls entirely within the area of linguistic competence that falls within communicative competence. The place where the two circles overlap is the place which covers basic language skills for both communicative and grammatical competence and is the place our writing class

should focus for ESL students. The area where LC stands by itself is the branch of linguistic science, which, I do not think ESL students should deal with -- at least not at the beginning; the area where CC stands by itself contains the unwritten rules of social convention in communication and some usage where grammar rules do not lend themselves. The goal of an ESL writing class is to teach ESL students to communicate with others; therefore, the class should begin with the bigger circle (CC), where both communicative and grammatical competence are emphasized. I conclude that grammar should be taught to ESL students as an important part of their language acquisition since language competence will be a major determinant in their future career.

What Kind of Grammar We Should Teach

Grammar debates seem to go on and on, but some of the arguments result from people having different definitions of grammar. If we ask people what grammar is, we will get various answers. So, first of all, we should be clear about what grammar is. Here is what I mean by grammar when I talk about grammatical competence. According to Patrick Hartwell, there are five kinds of grammar:

Grammar 1 is the set of formal patterns in which the words of a language are arranged in order to convey larger meanings. (the grammar in the natives' heads)

Grammar 2 is the branch of linguistic science which is concerned with the description, analysis, and formulation of formal language patterns.

Grammar 3 is linguistic etiquette. The word in this sense is often coupled with a derogatory adjective: we say that the expression "he ain't here" is bad grammar. (it is actually usage)

Grammar 4 is the rules of common school grammar, literally the grammar used in the schools.

Grammar 5 is stylistic grammar, defined as grammatical terms used in the interest of teaching prose style. (Hartwell 166-178).

Once we are clear about the definitions of grammar, we will be in a much better position to engage in an argument for what kinds of grammar should be taught to ESL students. The five kinds of grammar above may be applied to different learners and purposes.

Some people say that since we teach grammar to native speakers, we should also teach ESL students in the same way; we do not have to put them in different categories. I do not agree. Native English speakers and ESL students make very different mistakes. The following examples are mistakes made by a native English speaker and a Chinese ESL student:

Native English speaker

"I should of gone with you."

"I believe it is important for young people getting out of high school today attend college" (Shaughnessy 100).

Chinese ESL student

"There was really no such record like mine before." (from my students' homework)

We do not have any trouble understanding the first two sentences although they have grammatical errors. "Should of" is the kind of mistake ESL students almost never make because the rule never changes (modal verb is always followed by an infinitive); native English speakers learn English by hearing it, so they are more likely to make a phonological error. The sentence written by the Chinese student sounds awkward although seemingly there is no grammar error in it. He writes in English words but expresses the meaning in the logic of Chinese language. The meaning the ESL student wants to express is "my record is better than anyone else's before." In this case, the Chinese grammar the ESL student has in his mind gets in the way of his learning English.

The following example will present a difference between native English speakers and ESL students in mastering English grammar. When Hartwell asks a group of native English speakers to arrange the adjectives (French, the young, four) in a natural order, they show productive control over the rule they denied knowing. Hartwell says:

> I have never seen a native speaker of English who did not immediately produce the natural order, 'the four young French girls.' The rule is that in English the order of adjectives is first, number, second, age, and third, nationality. Native speakers can create analogous phrases using the rule; and the drive for meaning is so great that they will create sense out of violations of the rules for emphasis: 'I want to talk to the French four young girls' (Hartwell 167).

We can envision a large room where there are people of different nationalities, and Hartwell wants to talk to the group of French young girls instead of German or Swedish or Canadian, etc. Native speakers of English unconsciously internalize these rules in their minds while they are growing up. For ESL students, it is a completely different situation. They had English grammar lessons before they came to the U.S., but it is impossible for them to have all those rules internalized. They have to first figure out, "Is the adjective a number? or age? or anything else?" then to decide which one goes first and which one goes second. So grammar 1, the grammar in the native speaker's head must be taught to ESL students.

Grammar 3 is linguistic etiquette. According to Hartwell, it is not really grammar, but usage. Here is a conversation between an American and an ESL student:

American -- "May I close the door?"
ESL student -- "I'd like you to close half of it."
American -- (laughs) "I'll close the whole door half way."

I used to tell my students: this is not English; it is Chinglish, meaning Chinese English: the words are in English; but the logic is in Chinese. Lacking knowledge of English etiquette, ESL students are sometimes hampered in their communication. In order to make ESL students both grammatically and communicatively competent (the bigger circle (CC)), we should teach them grammar 3.

Grammar 5 is stylistic grammar, grammatical terms used in the interest of teaching prose style. The purpose of our writing class for ESL students is to teach them how to write. In American colleges, no one can survive without being able to write a standard academic paper. ESL students need to learn some style and format in order to be accepted by the academic world. Stylistic grammar enables them to control the language by manipulating it in meaningful contexts. So, if we combine grammars 1, 3, and 5, they should fit into the bigger circle (CC) of the diagram.

I suggest ESL students should not have to deal with grammar 2 at the beginning because grammar 2 is Linguistic science - learning about language instead of learning to use the language. Most ESL college students are not ready to cope with it yet (the LC part that stands by itself). I also suggest strongly that we do not teach ESL college students grammar 4 -- common school grammar, because most of them have already become tired of learning school grammar in their home country. Teaching grammar 4 will only diminish their interest in learning to write.

In conclusion, teaching Grammar 1, 3, and 5 will help ESL college students improve their writing abilities in English and express themselves clearly, effectively, and vigorously.

How to Integrate Grammar With Writing Instruction

Once we decide grammar should be taught and what kind of grammar should be taught to ESL students, we are faced with the issue of how to integrate grammar with writing instruction. As Jan Frodesen points out in "Grammar in Writing":

> Developments in composition theory and research during the past few decades have certainly contributed to our understanding of writing processes and have helped us to design and implement more effective composition programs and teaching materials. The paradigm shift in composition theory from a focus on writing products to that of writing processes has also resulted in confusion about the role of grammar in ESL writing instruction (264).

The role of grammar is confusing because grammar rules simply guide students' writing without necessarily improving their written product. On the one hand, ESL teachers want to teach ESL students how to write; on the other hand, ESL teachers are aware that they cannot simply teach grammatical rules. The special relationship between grammar and writing makes the teaching of writing to ESL students more challenging. The following research is shown in "Grammar in Writing":

> A study by McGirt (1984) showed a statistically significant difference between holistic ratings of ESL essays with morphosyntactic and mechanical errors intact and ratings of the same essays in which errors had been corrected; in contrast, the difference in ratings for a control group of native English speaker essays with and without errors was not significant (Frodesen 264).

The study shows that ESL writers' errors negatively affect assessments of overall writing quality. The essays are rated in terms of how well ideas are communicated. If we look at the example of mistakes

made by the ESL student mentioned above, ("I 'd like you to close half of the door"), we are likely to accept what McGirt's study has shown. Because of the ESL students' special situation and need I suggest that we should integrate grammar with our writing instruction in our ESL college students' writing classes. There are four steps to be taken in sequence to help ESL students start learning how to write standard essays and research papers in English.

I. Reading and analyzing texts:

ESL students come from many different countries with different levels of English competence; we cannot expect them to write standard academic papers from day one. Some people think that free writing is a good way to get started, but ESL students feel that they have much to say about a certain topic in their native language while they only have a few sentences to say about the same topic in English. Some of them may have written a couple of letters in English; others may have translated some information they are interested in from English into their native language; but few have been required to write an academic paper in English. Some of the students' TOFEL scores are over 600, (considered to be high proficiency in English) yet they still cannot write properly and clearly in English.

At the beginning stage of the writing class, teachers should purposely select some reading material that illustrates some of the main features of the English language. For example: texts containing restrictive and nonrestrictive relative clauses; texts containing the usage of definite or indefinite articles; texts containing different tenses, etc. (Frodesen 267). Through reading and analyzing the texts, students will become more conscious of how and why the writers write the way they do. In different types of text-analysis exercises, students can develop greater understanding of how grammar contributes to communication by identifying and explaining the meanings or functions of grammatical structure in discourse contexts. One important thing the ESL teachers have to bear in mind is that the material chosen must not only show grammatical functions, but also be interesting to students. Over a period of time, the reading and text-analysis will help students build up their ability to express themselves in English. If necessary, one or two exercises in modeling may help students get started writing in English.

II. Guided writing:

Although the time spent at the outset reading, doing text analysis, and modeling is a necessary investment, the object of any writing class is to have students work on their writing; the only way to learn to write is to write. I do not believe that anyone has become a good writer just by reading books like The Power of Writing, College Writing, How to Write, etc. Learning to write is like learning to drive a car: both demand practice. Just as you will not be able to learn to drive a car until you sit behind the wheel to practice, no matter how well you have scored on the written test, writing skill only comes with writing. So, after some reading exercises, teachers should let students start to write -- at first, some short paragraphs or papers. The topics students write about must be carefully designed, sequenced, and structured so that the teacher knows exactly what the learning goal of each assignment is and so that students gain something specific by working on it (Frodesen 268). There are many factors to consider in selecting topics for student writing. Teachers can decide what to select according to the needs and goals of a particular class or give students a choice of topics so they can write about something they are familiar with from their experience. Even an excellent writer without specific knowledge will not write good instructions on how to put the parts of a machine together.

Once the topic is chosen, teachers should hold group or class discussion before ESL students actually engage in writing. The discussion can help students develop their ideas. Sometimes I find ESL students have excellent ideas, but the ideas are blocked from their writing because the students are still struggling between thinking in English and thinking in their native language. The ideas are incubating, the ESL student is mulling them over in his mind but is not yet ready to articulate them. It is the time when reading texts, group or class discussion, and teacher's suggestions can be really helpful. We should use a policy of from part to whole and back to part and from students to teacher and back to students again. This diagram illustrates the process:

words --> sentences --> paper (global revision) -->
--> paragraphs --> sentences --> words
students --> teacher --> students --> teacher
--> students
(Punctuation is included in sentences
and spelling is included in words.)

After the discussions have been held, the students begin to write. After students write a first draft, one or two grammar lessons can be developed and inserted to deal with the errors students made in their initial writing. This way of learning grammar is more effective than picking up a handbook and starting from "Parts of Speech." Or better yet, have students teach a grammar section dealing with one of the recurring errors in their own papers to a small group or the whole class. (They have to study the section in the handbook relevant to their errors and try to become an expert on the problem.) The benefits of letting students teach are enormous: the grammar study is well-targeted; the student's role changes from being passive to being active; through teaching, they gain insight into the problems instead of only knowing how to use a certain grammatical rule; the activity will give students better ability to manipulate the language in their own writing; and they will acquire more confidence to master other problems (Vieta 94-96).

I use guided writing as the second step so that ESL students can lay a good foundation for their writing. Once students become more comfortable writing in English with more grammatical competence (I do not mean they are perfect), we should quickly move on because our goal is to teach them how to write, not simply to teach grammar. The purpose of teaching grammar is to make them more competent in their writing and to teach them how to approach the language. Grammar only serves as a bridge to reach our goal.

III. Teacher's response:

Teachers' responses are very important, especially for the first paper. I suggest teachers not put a grade on the paper until ESL students learn how to revise. Teachers' responses now should focus on the general organization of the paper since grammatical errors have been addressed by teachers and students working together in the process of the writing. Teachers' responses should view the paper as a whole and ask students whether they have expressed what they wanted to say. The responses should be concise and specific, not like a rubber stamp. For example, one teacher's comment on a student paper is "Think more about your readers." Another is "Wordy - be precise." Responses like these can be put on any paper; students will not get the kind of help they needed by these kinds of comments. The responses should be in accordance with what the students have read and the kinds of text analysis they have done. "The challenge we face as teachers is to develop comments which will provide an inherent reason for students to revise; it is a sense of revision as discovery" (Sommers 148). For example, a student writes a paper on "The American Indians"; the teacher could write the comment, "I am very interested in your topic and would like you to tell me more about the American Indians". A comment like this will make the reason to revise inherent and encourage the student to do more research. Teachers' positive responses at this time can be a useful reinforcement for students' writing. Learning to write takes time and teachers cannot expect students to become good writers overnight or even over a semester. Teachers should focus on how much progress the students have made over a period of time.

The next step in the writing process is to teach students how to revise.

IV. Global revision

Teaching ESL students revising skills is very important so that they are able to step back from their own writing and look at it from a reader's point of view.

Linda Flower states: "Writer-Based prose is a verbal expression written by a writer to himself and for himself." She goes on to say that we should move "the focus of how did I go about my research or reading of the assignment and what did I see" to a focus on "What significant conclusion can be drawn and why" (37). Revision can help students read their own writing as if they were reading someone else's writing.

1. Read the paper aloud:

In the process of writing a paper, the writer is always the first reader. Reading the paper aloud at the beginning can help them hear whether the paper is well

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organized and states what they wanted to say, and may help them find some grammatical errors.

2. Let a native speaker read the paper:

Native speakers will be very quick to find whether ESL students have expressed themselves in idiomatic English and whether they have written in English words but in their native language's logic. Very often native speakers will say to ESL students: "Yes, I understand what you mean, but it sounds awkward because we do not say it in the way you do." Asking ESL students to have their papers read by a native English speaker is also an effective way to get them to intermingle with American people instead of hanging on to their own native language communities; this intermingling will also accelerate their acquisition of English.

3. Revise paragraphs:

Once ESL writers are satisfied with the overall organization of the paper, they can go on to revising paragraphs. Three source books that are widely used to develop writers' revision skills are Revising Prose by Richard A. Lanham, Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity & Grace by Joseph M. Williams, and The Right Handbook: Grammar and Usage in Context by Pat Belanoff, Betsy Rorschach, and Mia Oberlink. I found The Right Handbook that focuses on global revision more useful and appropriate for my exploration of the teaching of writing to ESL students; the former two focus only on style.

Revising Prose, a style manual, concentrates on providing ways to get rid of "The Official Style"--which "builds its sentences on a form of the verb 'to be' plus strings of prepositional phrases fore and aft" (Lanham 15). ESL students, almost all beginning writers, do not have "The Official Style" in their writing. They may make similar mistakes, but these mistakes are not their major problem and so not of paramount concern. Although this book is not suitable for ESL students, one of the methods put forth in the book can be utilized by ESL students: ask the question, "Who is kicking who?" to find the basic structure of a sentence. This approach can help ESL students to find the subject, verb, and object of a sentence so as to avoid sentence fragments.

Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity & Grace is not as dogmatic as Revising Prose, presenting rules both absolute and optional with a touch of creativity. I would not choose it for ESL students, although most can use lesson two: "Correctness" and lesson nine: "Punctuation" as a reference; these two lessons effectively show the basic grammatical rules of sentence formation (e.g. He is, not He are; the book, not book the) and punctuation through examples. However, as the writer himself tells us in his preface:

> This book addresses only one aspect of composition: style. It does not take up matters of intention, invention, or all of organization. Nor is this book intended for basic writers. I intend it to be a short book that focuses on a problem that mature writers wrestle with: a wordy, tangled, indirected prose style (Williams).

This is a bit beyond most ESL students, at least until they have mastered most of the basics.

The Right Handbook is quite suitable for ESL students because it guides readers through the whole process of writing and revising and even has a separate chapter for ESL learners. In addition it has suggestions for ESL learners in other chapters at appropriate spots. As an example:

> If you are not a native speaker of English, you have to actively seek out situations where language is integral to the activity, where you have to interact with others in English, so that you can start to develop a feeling for what is correct. Reading this book will give you ideas about how to evaluate your writing, as well as ideas about how context influences choices you make as a writer (Belanoff et.al. 3).

Other than the fact that it has special advice for ESL learners, I would recommend The Right Handbook to all teachers and students of writing because of its concise and direct style. This is not a typical handbook and yet it is filled with good advice and many examples. We can see its approach in its practical method to revise paragraphs:

> We suggest that you read each paragraph in your essay closely. Once you have done that, write in the margin as briefly as possible what the paragraph says; this will be a summary of its content. Under the content statement, jot down what the paragraph "does". If you have trouble doing either of these, you've got more writing and thinking to do. If you can't give a brief summary of the content of a paragraph, perhaps the paragraph is trying to say too much. If you find more than one sentence in a paragraph which can serve as a statement of its central idea, you'll want to check and make certain that ideas in the paragraph are developed, not just restated. If you can't figure out what a particular paragraph is "doing," either there's no reason for

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> the paragraph to be there or -- what is more likely -- you need to retrace your prior thinking and try to recapture what was in your mind when you first wrote the paragraph (26-27).

This method is very effective in that it makes the writer think about the paragraphs in a reverse way. The summary statements for each paragraph become a kind of outline. It is especially useful for writers who do not have an outline before they start to write. It allows the writers to step back from their papers and rethink the thesis of each paragraph.

In this part, I only dwell on paragraph revision by using The Right Handbook as a reference. In the following part I will briefly talk about how to revise sentences, phrases, words, and mechanics. The Right Handbook will give ESL teachers and students detailed examples.

4. Check sentences, phrases, words and mechanics:

Grammar comes in handy when student writers check individual sentences, phrases, words, and mechanics. The rules students analyzed in their reading (step I) are reinforced by their own writing, and peer grammar teaching at the beginning of the writing stage makes them more aware of how the English language works. As Mina P. Shaughnessy explains in Errors and Expectations,

> Proofreading becomes an indispensable aid to the mastery of grammar. What the students are not in the habit of doing is looking long and carefully at sentences in order to understand the way they work rather than what they mean. This involves a shift in perception which is ultimately more important than the mastery of any individual rule of grammar (129).

By learning to revise sentences, phrases, words, and mechanics, students will ponder more on the way language works and how to make it work in a better way to express what they have to say instead of focusing on the meaning of the language itself. Once again, I suggest ESL teachers or students check out the Right Handbook because it is not a traditional handbook. It does not preach rules; you will not find the answer for a particular question. The book helps you make choices and decisions in the special context you have created in your writing.

Learning grammar is only a means; it is not the goal. The goal is to help students become efficient writers through teaching grammar and other class activities. ESL teachers should keep this goal in mind at all times and reinforce it in writing class whenever possible.

The writing process itself is not linear; it is recursive: the revision process may take place well before the writer finishes a draft. The writing style of each writer is not the same; it is very personal: some people begin in the middle, and some people like to write on a computer, others have to write drafts longhand. One way is not necessarily superior to others, so students should be allowed to write in their personal style. After students have learned how to revise, ESL teachers should teach them how to use an English handbook efficiently to enable them to make their writing standard by themselves. In the future, they will have to be independent of their teachers and write for the real world.

Once the students become more confident in their writing and more familiar with the method of global revision, the teacher can ask students to revise before they turn in the paper, or even have a peer evaluation to make them think more about the audience and work harder on making themselves understood. According to the theory of transactional rhetoric, we should not let writer and audience, process and product outweigh each other. They are all important elements in our writing class (Berlin).

Conclusion

Although this paper elaborates many ways of teaching writing, there are always different situations and requirements for ESL writing classes. Sometimes it may be appropriate to start from the second step -- guided writing; or the third step -- teacher's response; or even the last step -- global revision, instead of from the very beginning. Often times, we have to deal with an individual student differently from the rest of the class although they are all ESL students. No matter what our approaches are, ESL teachers should understand that writing is both creative and social. We teach them how to write, but at the same time, we are also helping them to assimilate into college and society. As Shaughnessy says in Errors and Expectations,

> Neglected by the dominant society, they [ESL students] have nonetheless had their own worlds to grow up in and they arrive on our campuses as young adults, with opinions and languages and plans already in their minds. College both beckons and threatens them, offering to teach them useful ways of thinking and talking about the world, promising even to improve the quality of their

> lives, but threatening at the same time to take from them their distinctive ways of interpreting the world, to assimilate them into the culture of academia without acknowledging their experience as outsiders (292).

Especially for teachers who have ESL students as a minority in their classes instead of having a whole ESL class, we need to make special efforts to meet ESL students' needs, and very often they need extra help. A view of writing being social has significant practical implications for the teaching of writing:

> We write not as isolated individuals but as members of communities whose beliefs, concerns, and practices both instigate and constrain, at least in part, the sorts of things we can say. Our aims and intentions in writing are thus not merely personal, idiosyncratic, but reflective of the communities to which we belong (Harris 268).

No matter where they come from, they have to speak English and to write according to the standard of the American academic world, but that does not mean that they will not reveal their values and beliefs in their writing.

ESL teachers should try to know ESL students' cultures and background, even their languages so as to understand why they write or make mistakes in writing the way they do. It may well be that ESL students are suffering from writer's block because of missing their home country, or feeling alien, or not being able to succeed. As Karen Burke LeFevre points out in Invention as a Social Act, "Invention is a dialectical process in that the inventing individual(s) and the socioculture are co-existing and mutually defining" (35). Sometimes ESL students feel frustrated because they see themselves as neither part of the American culture nor as part of their home culture. The fear of losing identity distracts them from concentrating on their writing. ESL teachers should be understanding and help them get over this culture shock period. ESL teachers should work hard to train ESL college students to be successful writers in American colleges, let them contribute to American academia, and make American culture richer and more diverse.

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A Case for Grammar in a Multicultural College Writing Classroom

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In promoting his book, Sentence Sense, Dr. Anthony Hunter was reported as saying that "it is his conviction that the inaccurate and abstract definitions of 'school grammar' have left children bankrupt in their knowledge of how our language works" (The Council 14). Unfortunately, many colleges do not do much to remedy that situation either. Most writing instructors and researchers are still where Jaime Hylton was in 1985 when she showed disappointment in Robert DeBeaugrande's "approach to the questions of whether and how we should teach grammar in the composition classroom" (340). And some argue that in a multicultural classroom, English grammar is an imposition on some students.

As a keynote speaker at the invitational conference, "Reclaiming the Dream: Language and Learning in Multicultural Urban Communities", Dr. Orlando Taylor posed two very significant questions regarding English Language arts education: "Do we teach that standard English is the right English all the time, or do we teach from the perspective that says, 'Here's a tool that you may use when you need it'"? (emphasis mine), ("Urban English" 7). I have always advocated, and will argue in my presentation, that grammar is a valuable tool and should be taught as such, especially in multicultural college writing classrooms. Such an approach serves a double purpose. It is a very practical way to "allow gender and regional and ethnic nuances and styles of communication to be preserved" ("Urban English" 7), and at the same time, such an approach equips students with an essential tool they need to operate efficiently intranationally and internationally.

During the decade I have spent around fellow college composition instructors, I have, every now and then, noticed a growing uneasiness whenever the subject of grammar in composition classes is brought up, and it is often, understandably, met with resistance. Many convincing arguments have been made against the teaching of grammar in college composition classrooms. The value and validity of grammar instruction in writing classes are on-line debatable issues. The bottom line though is that English grammar has a place in our college composition classes, more so in multicultural college composition classes.

In a multicultural college writing classroom, grammar plays an even greater role than it does in any other situation. In such a classroom, we have students from various high schools, with differing experiences when it comes to their knowledge of the English language. We also have in the same classroom, students who have been made to feel inferior because of the way they talk and write. As college students, they are in search of themselves; they often have an identity crisis to settle now that they are soon going to be adults, and they want their own languages and/or dialects, and their experiences that go with such languages and/or dialects validated, not despised, ignored or worse still rubbed out. As Johnson noted, we sometimes make the mistake of teaching standard English as a replacement dialect rather than an alternate dialect, and most of our non-white students reject that approach, and understandably so. Here is where English grammar provides a neutral medium for the instructor to talk comfortably to students of different backgrounds and explain problems in their work without offending any one group. English grammar is neutral, and that cannot be overemphasized in a multiculturally mixed classroom. It is an aspect of the English language that, all people, regardless of their backgrounds, are taught just like any other subject.

There are so many arguments against teaching grammar to students using the various technical terms because such terms are hard, ambiguous, obsolete, and the list goes on. DeBeaugrande suggests that before we get back to basics, "we have to develop a

clear, generally accessible language for talking grammar with students" (358); I couldn't agree more. But we also have to keep in mind that the grammar of any natural language is hard to master, and English is no exception. So, if we want to play the English language game by its rules, we definitely must find a way of teaching English grammar to our college students without oversimplifying it; this supposedly vague, hard-to-master grammar happens to be one of the rules by which the English language game is played. After all, these are college students who can successfully master definitions in Chemistry, remember dates in History, play musical notes, and the list goes on. Why do we, English teachers, assume that the technical language of grammar is too hard for them!!

As students in a multicultural classroom work together to master this grammar, they may come to a realization that no-one group can claim superiority in this aspect of the English language. If they complain that it is hard, so much the better because it means that they have recognized its existence as a subject to be learnt, not simply as a language of the culturally dominant group. I am well aware that there are places in almost all college institutions where students can get grammar help as needed; the problem is that many of our students do not go to such places even when asked to do so. The few who go there have to study the grammar we refuse to teach them in the classrooms with tutors who know about as much grammar as the students they have to tutor; these tutors happen to be our students.

If we equip our students in a multicultural college composition classroom with the knowledge of the language they need to communicate effectively among themselves, we can be assured that collaborative learning will take place. In groups, these students can read each other's papers critically and clearly explain what needs to be done to improve such papers without antagonizing each other.

By using English grammar as a medium of communication in a multicultural classroom, we enable the students to hold on to their personal identities when it comes to language, and at the same time function perfectly in the environment they find themselves in. To sum it up in answer to Dr. Taylor's question, teaching English grammar in a multicultural writing classroom allows "gender and regional and ethnic nuances and styles of communication to be preserved" ("Urban English" 7). Students should be assured, continuously if needed, that by teaching them English grammar, the institutions are by no means suggesting that their individual languages and/or dialects are inferior to Standard English. They are simply equipping them with a tool to use as needed, and one very obvious place to our students where such a neutral medium of communication is needed is in a multicultural classroom so that they can comfortably communicate among themselves without giving up their own individual languages and/or dialects. Dr. Taylor, among others, observed that students can have that language of education and at the same time preserve and celebrate diversity, including linguistic diversity; we only need to find out the best way to teach them that language without alienating them. As Simon put it: "there must be ways to convey that both home and school languages have their validity and uses and that knowing both enables one to accomplish more in life" (345).

English grammar is a tool our students, regardless of background, commonly need to function intranationally and internationally. Intranationally, as I commented in one of my papers, we are living in a society that has set certain standards for success. And individualistic as this society is, it, ironically, has no tolerance for individuals who decide to be themselves and deviate from the 'norm'. As Burling pointed out, "millions of Americans take it for granted that any one who fails to speak Standard English gives unmistakable evidence of his lack of education or even of his defective intellect" (91). Despite all the studies to the contrary, one can very easily be called a deprived, underclass person just for having a 'different' dialect. This is the real world we are preparing our college students to enter; we must, therefore, arm them for survival with standard English as a tool to use when they need it. Simon puts it bluntly: "if you cannot change your sex or color to the one that is getting preferential treatment, you might as well learn good English and profit by it in your career, your social relations, perhaps even in your basic self-confidence" (341). Students who are confident and secure concerning their identity and the

status of their languages and/or dialects can very easily switch codes as needed. In the case of African American students, Labov is quoted by Jones as saying that "It is the goal of most black Americans to acquire full control of the standard language without giving up their own culture" (115), and they can do it very successfully, if English grammar is taught to them. They also may benefit from the knowledge of structural differences between their dialect and standard English. It is my conviction that for African American students, bidialectalism which was advocated in the early 70's only to be rejected as difficult and ineffective, is a practical, achievable goal at the college level because college students understand what is at stake. Dr. Taylor cited the encouraging results of a National Public Radio (NPR) feature about attitudes young African American women in Washington D.C. had toward English classes; in this feature, "African American women acknowledged they can speak Standard English and they 'use it when they have to' " (emphasis mine), ("Urban English" 7); in other words, college students are capable of switching dialects as is often done by non-white professionals in the work place. As far as we are concerned, "it is OK [for our students] to rap as long as they can talk stocks and bonds on Wall Street" (Locke). We have no intention of correcting, or worse still, replacing their dialect with standard English.

We also need to paint a vivid international picture for our students, concerning the English Language. There is a myth in the U.S. that English is a white man's language, and this myth is the reason some college African American students resist the drills associated with standard English. They feel that adopting this language will be an open betrayal of their culture. As Jones put it, it is a "depressing reality that for many blacks, standard English is not only unfamiliar, it is socially unacceptable" (117). Consequently, often when an African American student makes an effort to use standard English, especially in speech, one is shunned by peers. Jones, for example, states, "because of the way I talk, some of my black peers look at me sideways and ask, 'why do you talk like you're white?'" (116). We should make a concerted effort to explain to our college students when such a situation arises that the language of education we are teaching them is not a white man's language the way they have been brought up to think; numerous international examples can be given to support this claim. In the U.S., first of all, not all whites 'talk' , let alone 'sound' the same, and so accusations of 'you are one of them', 'you talk white', or 'you sound white' are unfounded and basically meaningless. Secondly, if all whites in the U.S. excelled in the use of standard English, our writing labs and developmental English classes would be a 100% non-whites, but we all know as well as our students do that such is not always the case. Thirdly, and definitely most important for our students to know, if they already don't, is that standard English, the type we are teaching them, is an international language of communication. As Kachru put it, "today, the sun never sets on the English language.... Estimates of the number of English speakers today, ... range from 800 million to 2 billion" (Allen). Mabe too observed that "as the 20th.C. winds down, English is the closest thing to a world language the earth has ever had" (112). "With the globalization of everything from entertainment to politics to economics" as Dr. Taylor put it, we cannot consciously set our students up for failure in the international circles by concentrating on regional scruples. This language of education, as Dr. Taylor noted "allows us, in the market place, to not have chaos," and we definitely do not want our graduates to cause chaos in the rapidly expanding international market place ("Urban English" 7).

The goal should be communication beyond one's neighborhood, and the ability to communicate intranationally and internationally has not been found detrimental to any group's culture, let alone a threat to existence; the lack of such ability, on the other hand, can lead an individual into oblivion; the choice is, therefore, clear. Small children may be difficult to

motivate using the logic of jobs and world communication, but college students should understand that logic, thereby making the teaching of English grammar to them an undisputable issue, one we do not need to justify, and overall, a rewarding experience for both the teachers and the students.

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Improving Grammar and Other Writing Skills with Text Reconstruction (TR)

-- Myra Linden

Third graders find grammar easy to learn, at least according to E. D. Hirsch in What Your Third Grader Needs To Know:

> Grammar really isn't hard, because you already know much of it. Maybe you aren't aware that you are already using grammar, but, really, you have to use some grammar every time you speak. Spoken grammar isn't always exactly the same as the grammar that people use in writing, but it's mostly the same You already know about nouns and verbs. It's time to learn the names for other kinds of words (49).

In fact, by the end of third grade, pupils "need to know" complete sentences and their three types, as well as subjects, predicates, parts of words (prefixes and suffixes), antonyms, synonyms, abbreviations, parts of speech (including articles), subject-verb agreement, and consistent tense usage (What Your Second Grader 65-69; What Your Third Grader 49-58).

Such being the case, some skeptics might ask why Bell Labs considered it necessary to spend two years in the late 1970s developing the collection of main-frame Programs called the Writer's Workbench, the first style-analysis program for writers. They might also ask why Grammatik, the grammar checker PC program based on the Writer's Workbench, has sold 5 million copies since its first appearance in 1981, with 1992 sales alone of $14 million (Walz). Presumably, these sales figures indicate a market composed of an impressive number of former second- and third-graders, who reviewed and added to their grammar knowledge annually through their senior year of high school and possibly their freshman year of college.

Apparently Bell Labs and Bruce Wampler, who spent over 12 years developing Grammatik, are helping to compensate for the general inability to apply grammar rules to the writing process. In fact, Wampler, a former computer scientist at Sandia National Laboratories, now a University of New Mexico computer teacher and writer about computer programming, told Associated Press reporter Walz:

> We helped people improve their writing . . . Our company helped establish grammar-checking as an important part of the writing process in computers.
>
> It feels good to have done that (Walz).

Interestingly, in 1906 Franklin S. Hoyt failed to find a "relationship between a knowledge of technical grammar and the ability to use English and to interpret language" (483 - 484). Yet in the eighty-eight years since then, in spite of a plethora of similar studies with similar results, English teachers have continued to teach what Patrick Hartwell calls Grammar 4, school grammar (110). In a few short years, however, computer programmers succeeded in establishing "grammar-checking as an important part of the writing process," thereby achieving mechanically much of what English teachers have failed to do through the teaching of school grammar.

It is comparatively easy for someone like Hirsch to decide what students "need to know" about grammar to improve their writing; it is quite another matter to develop effective means to really improve writing. Too often students fall in a Never-Never Land gap between what teachers teach and what students learn as revealed by NAEP writing test results showing 75 percent of high school graduates unable to meet the demands of either advanced academic writing or on-the-job writing tasks (Applebee 9).

Recently researchers have focused on developing what Robert de Beaugrande calls a "learners' grammar" as opposed to a "teachers' grammar" (66) or what others call a pedagogical grammar. Along these lines, after a comprehensive survey of grammar research studies, Hartwell concludes that students are best served by learning a functional grammar, not through studying grammar rules and terminology but through manipulating the language (125-127).

For the purposes of this paper, I shall use de

Beaugrande's definition of grammar as the basis of my discussion: "all the things people do when they put words together." In addition, his definition opens instructional possibilities, based as it is upon the idea that "every learner already knows a large part of the grammar of English and shows it -- not in descriptive definitions but in patterns of activity. This basis should be harnessed for learning to write" (66).

A modern version of a proven learning-to-write process, text reconstruction (TR), capitalizes on both language manipulation and "patterns of activity" to teach grammar and other writing skills in the context of connected discourse beyond the single sentence. Thus it is a useful supplement to other methods of teaching grammar. In his autobiography Benjamin Franklin tells how he devised a form of TR to improve his writing skills. As an apprentice in his brother's print shop, he set into print the essays of Addison and Steele. He took notes from the essays by writing several words from each sentence. These he calls "short hints of the sentiment in each sentence." Next he mixed the hints into random order and set them aside.

Several weeks later he tried to arrange the hints into their original order to recreate the logical organization of the essay. He says, "This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts." Then he attempted to write each sentence from just the hints, checking back to the original and noting any deviations, trying to master the vocabulary, sentence structure, and style of the writer (208-209).

A variation of TR is used in the workbook by Arthur Whimbey and Elizabeth Lynn Jenkins, Analyze, Organize, Write. The authors wrote sample papers and then jumbled the sentences within each paragraph. Students number the sentences in what they consider the best order. Then they compare arrangements and discuss differences with other students, pinpointing the information and logic they employ. Finally, they write the sentences in the order numbered.

Here is a short sample TR exercise and the instructions for students:

Instructions: Read all the sentences. Decide which should come first and number it 1. Then decide which should come second and number it 2. Continue numbering the remaining sentences in this way.

_____ Therefore, when nineteen-year-old Michael Grubbs became this year's queen, it shocked no one.

_____ One year its queen was a dog and another year a refrigerator.

_____ Rice University has had some unusual homecoming queens in the past.

_____ So Michael has agreed to give up his title and escort his runner-up, Nancy Jones, to the festivities.

_____ But Cotton Bowl rules prohibit a man from being a princess in the parade.

Check your numbers with a neighbor if possible. Where you disagree, explain to each other why you arranged the sentences as you did.

Next, copy the sentences in the order you numbered them on a separate sheet of paper. Copying sentences can be especially helpful for improving writing skills if done as Ben Franklin did -- from memory. Do not just copy word-by-word. For each sentence, follow these steps:

1. Read as many words as you believe you can write correctly from memory (usually five to ten words).

2. Write those words from memory, including all capitals and punctuation marks.

3. Check back to the original sentence and correct any errors you made.

4. Read the next group of words and repeat the steps.

Generally you will be able to read, memorize, and correctly write between five and ten words. Sometimes you may be able to remember an entire simple sentence correctly. But with a large difficult-to-spell word, you may try to write only that one word correctly from memory.

Writing from memory is a powerful technique for

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learning the spelling, grammar, punctuation, and word patterns used in standard written English (Linden Analytical 2).

As you can see, TR involves analyzing an author's work and copying his or her language to strengthen one's own writing skills. This method was used at the Handy Colony that produced James Jones and other successful authors. Members of the colony were assigned to read and analyze works and then to copy them in order to get the feel of finishing an extended piece of work, to handle transitions from scene to scene, and to learn conciseness. Jones himself said that one can read until his eyes are red but only by copying word for word can a person see how an author builds up his effects (MacShane 117-118).

Copying is a time-honored, recently rediscovered mode of learning. From its use by Renaissance schoolboys like Shakespeare with their copybooks (to record exercises) and commonplace books (to record passages of possible content for their own essays), copying played an important role in the education of many famous authors including Milton, Thomas Jefferson, Jack London, Malcolm X, and Joan Didion.

Arranging sentences and copying them from memory teach students how to organize and express ideas with the vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and syntax of standard written English. For example, many students have difficulty integrating the use of separate aspects of coherence, including the use of topic sentences and topic statements, major and minor support, and transition words and phrases. They have problems, too, with coherence devices such as the use of classified lists of transitions, the repetition of key words, the use of synonyms for key words, pronoun reference, and parallel grammar forms. In short, they cannot make the most of available means to achieve sentence-, paragraph-, and essay-level coherence.

The "Homecoming Queen" exercise reprinted above illustrates, how TR enhances student understanding and use of coherence devices. The language manipulation involved in arranging the sentences teaches a functional understanding of two coordinating conjunctions, but and so, and of a conjunctive adverb, therefore. The meaning of but is reinforced by the fact that it is used as a transition between contrasting sentences. So is used as a transition between two sentences stating a cause-result relationship. Likewise, therefore, a conjunctive adverb, indicates a cause-result relationship.

However, students are unable to order the exercise sentences logically without recognizing the use of other coherence devices. Sentence 2 ("One year....") is linked to Sentence 1 ("Rice University....") by the use of a pronoun its and repetition of a key term, queen(s). Furthermore, unless students notice the repetition of this key term queen in Sentence 3 ("Therefore. . . ."), they may miss the logical ordering pattern.

A more elaborate multi-paragraph exercise such as "Helpful Mapping Knowledge" below can be used to expand student understanding by illustrating the use of transition words and phrases, repeated key words or synonyms, and pronoun reference.

Helpful Mapping Knowledge

Instructions: Papers are coherent when one sentence flows into the next showing the connections between ideas. The student paper below illustrates several devices used to achieve such flow.

Directions: The sentences below can be arranged into a paper that explains the usefulness of map reading skills. Number the sentences within each paragraph so they sound best to you.

INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH:

_____ However, a knowledge of regional or state road maps can be very helpful to a driver in three basic ways.

_____ Highway signs alone as guides for an automobile trip are of limited benefit.

FIRST BODY PARAGRAPH:

_____ In both of these cases, if the driver knows how to read a map, he can find the route he wishes to take with little difficulty.

_____ For fast and safe travel he may select the multi-lane highways, designated as such on the map.

_____ First, when planning a trip, the driver with a knowledge of maps can choose a specific route to his destination depending on how he wishes to travel.

_____ On the other hand, if time is available, he may choose a scenic route and view some points of interest along the way.

SECOND BODY PARAGRAPH:

_____ And although not every little town is indicated, most small and medium size towns are marked on the maps so that the driver may still be able to find his way by checking for various cities and towns along the route.

_____ Second, when he is traveling in an unfamiliar region, the driver can use maps to avoid getting lost.

_____ For instance, all maps show major roads in a particular area, and most maps show minor roads, making it difficult for a driver with a knowledge of road maps to lose his way.

FINAL BODY PARAGRAPH:

_____ Also, the guides often show some of the more important points of interest that the driver may wish to visit in a particular region if he finds himself with additional time to do so.

_____ Since a driver may be confused by the maze of street detours and other unforeseen obstacles in large cities, metropolitan map inserts may provide enough information to alter his route as he proceeds.

_____ Finally, a driver may use the map inserts, "points of interest" guide, and other information charts contained in most maps to modify his journey as circumstances require.

(Stevens Point Area Public Schools 58-60).

Transition words and phrases used in the exercise are as follows: however, first, on the other hand, second, for instance, and, finally, and also. Repeated key words and synonyms include driver, map(s), knowledge of maps, knows how to read maps, route(s), town(s), guide(s), charts, and journey. Pronoun reference words used are these, he, himself, and his.

After students have ordered the sentences in the exercise, discussed their answers with others, and resolved their differing arrangements, they can copy them in order, following the directions after "Homecoming Queen" on pages 5-6. Once completed, TR exercises can serve as model papers for students' own assigned essays.

As demonstrated above, TR exercises can be designed to teach specific grammatical concepts such as coherence. For teachers who wish to create their own TR exercises, directions are given in the appendix of this paper as are sources of published TR workbooks. Moreover, Ed Vavra, Pennsylvania College of Technology, has developed a computerized version (CAOW) of the TR exercises from Arthur Whimbey's and Elizabeth Lynn Jenkins' Analyze, Organize, Write.

In textbook form TR offers several benefits such as improving thinking skills to aid writing and note taking, enabling students to recognize techniques needed for reader-based prose, improving verbal reasoning ability, helping students internalize conventions of standard written English, and serving as a starting point for student paragraphs and essays; in short, TR can be a major component in writing improvement. While it is useful with all students, it is particularly powerful for ESL and other students coming from homes in which standard English is not the primary language.

Ed Vavra discovered that in CAI form TR offers some special advantages which include teaching students "a lot about essay and paragraph structure, main and subordinate structures, and transitions"; providing for student mastery of concepts through mandatory sequencing of lessons; checking student work automatically; providing student feedback; recording dates, times, and time-on-task for assignments; recording student errors to allow for instructor intervention,

advice, and individual help; enabling instructors to judge appropriate length of assignments; displaying TR paragraphs in printed form; using only a single class period for an introductory lesson after which students do the CAI assignments on their own; encouraging them to do homework; and preventing the copying of homework (Vavra CAOW).

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APPENDIX:

Creating TR Exercises from Magazines, History Textbooks, Literary Pieces, and Other Printed Materials

1. Generally six sentences are the maximum number that can be placed in a jumbled set for students to rearrange logically. More can produce confusion unless the sentences are simple and only semi-jumbled.

2. Longer paragraphs can be separated into two sets of sentences which are rejoined when the paper is written.

3. Alternately, some sentences in longer paragraphs can be pre-numbered and others presorted into roughly first and second halves of the paragraph.

4. For examples see pp. 57+ of Why Johnny Can't Write: How to Improve Writing Skills from which this material is taken or Analyze, Organize, Write, both published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 365 Broadway, Hillsdale, NJ. 07642. Phone: 1-800-9-BOOKS-9. See also Whimbey, Arthur E., Williams, Eugene, Sr., and Myra J. Linden. Keys to Quick Writing Skills: Sentence Combining and Text Reconstruction. Birmingham, AL: EBSCO Curriculum Materials, 1994. (PO Box 486, ZIP 35201). Phone: 1-800-633-8623.

On Grammar, Writing Style and Writing Assessment: A Look at the Grammatical Choices Made within Standardized and Computer Adaptive Testing

-- Daniel Kies

Abstract

This study investigates a link between writing style (specifically stylistic options in sentence structure and word choice) and standardized test scores, reporting the results of a four year project comparing several standardized tests of English proficiency currently available in both paper-and-pencil and computer adaptive formats. The study focuses on students who were placed into developmental composition courses at a Midwestern college after failing to meet English proficiency standards, as judged by several standardized placement tests and by faculty readers of a freshman English writing sample. After the remedial composition course, the students were again asked for a writing sample, and 71% were judged competent freshman-level college writers by the same faculty evaluators. However, standardized test scores on a host of different tests used in the study (including the Descriptive Test of Language Skills, the Test of Standard Written English and two newer computer adaptive tests) showed no statistically significant increase.

Careful study of the students' essays during the course of remediation reveals possible explanations for the discrepancy. First, remedial students seem to succeed with some portions of the writing process before others; e.g., invention is mastered before an ability to organize ideas. Secondly, remedial students are stylistically naive; i.e., they do not exploit nor are they aware of the full range of available alternatives in word choice or sentence structure. Finally, standardized tests, by their nature and their construction, seem best suited to test the portions of the writing process learned last by developing (remedial) writers. The results of this study offer insights, then, into the writing process of developing (remedial) writers, into the most appropriate heuristic for remedial composition programs, and into the uses (and limits) of standardized tests and essay exams as methods of writing assessment.

1. Introduction

Just as many in our profession discuss the 'found' poem, I think of this effort here as a 'found' paper in the sense that it reports on some of my work establishing local norms for standardized tests both at Governors State University and now at the College of DuPage. Both institutions use standardized tests as placement tools in developmental English. And after completing a remedial English program, lasting from one to two semesters or quarters, students attempted a Competency Essay as a final exam. Gratifyingly for the developmental English composition instructors, the former remedial students were able to write sufficiently well 71% of the time to pass the Competency Essay examination. The Competency Essays were holistically evaluated by separate groups of English faculty.

However, when retested with the Standardized instrument, the same former remedial students showed statistically insignificant increases in their standardized test scores. Tables 1, 2, and 3 present the average score and percentile rank before and after instruction at both institutions, at different times, using three different tests -- the Test of Standard Written English (TSWE), the Descriptive Test of Language Skills (DTLS), and ETS' Computerized Placement Test (CPT).

TABLE 1
Governors State University Developmental English
Winter trimester of 1985
to the Spring/Summer trimester of 1986
N = 65 students
Average TSWE results before instruction:
Score - 15 Percentile Rank - 19
Average TSWE results after instruction:
Score - 17.5 Percentile Rank - 23

TABLE 2
College of DuPage Developmental Students
Fall quarter 1987 to Spring quarter 1989
N = 117

Average DTLS SENTENCE STRUCTURE results before instruction:

Score - 15 Percentlle Rank - 13

Average DTLS SENTENCE STRUCTURE results after instruction:

Score - 18 Percentile Rank - 23

TABLE 3
College of DuPage Developmental Students
Fall quarter 1990 to Spring quarter 1992
N = 85

Average CPT SENTENCE SKILLS results before instruction:

Score - 59 Percentile Rank - 16

Average CPT SENTENCE SKILLS results after instruction:

Score - 66 Percentile Rank - 25

That discrepancy motivated me to examine our instruction in the remedial composition program (for one explanation says that the remedial composition instructors were 'teaching to the test') and to examine the form, function, and nature of those tests, all of which ostensibly "measured" students' writing ability yet produced such divergent results.

2. Three Generalizations about the Writing Process, Writing Style, and Standardized Tests

After collecting the syllabi from the programs' instructors, looking at the exercises and assignments, and visiting classes, I concluded that the discrepancies between the test scores could not be easily attributed to instruction; i.e., the instructors were not "teaching to the test".

Further (longitudinal) support for the assumption that the origins of the discrepancy rests with the nature (and uses) of the tests was collected from freshmen in developmental writing courses at the College of DuPage during the 1987-88 and 1988-89 academic years. All students registering for classes at the College of DuPage are required to participate in a testing and advising program. One of the placement tests the college uses in the placement and advising of students is another Educational Testing service product, the "Sentence Structure" section of the Descriptive Test of Language Skills (1978).

One hundred seventeen students went through the developmental courses several instructors and I taught at the college during that time, and pre- and post-instruction Usage test numbers below do not reflect a significant increase in writing proficiency during the period in which they were enrolled in my developmental writing sections. However, I followed the academic careers of all 117 students as they proceeded through the freshman English composition sequence (a full year of composition) at the college. All 117 earned passing grades.

Furthermore, Breland (1977) validated the multiple choice tests with writing samples. Other validity studies have focused on other criteria: grades earned in freshman English classes (Bailey, 1977; Michael and Shaffer, 1979) and one year measures of academic performance (Suddick, 1981 and 1982). So given the small number of students in this study, and given the post hoc nature of this study, I did not feel compelled to question the validity of standardized tests as a measure of writing proficiency. Instead, I thought it more useful to study both the writing sample and the standardized instruments for systematic differences that might explain the scoring discrepancies among remedial writers. With that goal in mind, I made the following three observations.

First, after reviewing two hundred essays written by different students in developmental English, I noted that the students mastered some portions of the writing process (such as invention and -- to a lesser extent -- organization) before other portions of the writing process (such as revision). There is nothing new, or surprising, here. Britton et al. (1975), Perl (1979), Rose (1980), and Mayher et al. (1983) all noted the same developmental tendencies.

Second, developmental writers are stylistically naive: their knowledge of the stylistic options available to them through the language is limited, as is their knowledge of the functions those stylistic options serve, cf. Kies (1985a, 1985b, and 1990). The second point was first presented to me by a student, when she wrote the paragraph you see in example (1) below.[1]

> (1) However there were some negative experiences which I encountered. Some of the negative experiences were the inability of the foster parents to attempt to understand many of the needs of these foster children. In my opinion, many of the parents living with these children need councelling or family councelling between the children and the foster parents in order to alleviate many of the lack

of communications which were revealed which councelling some of these children such as lack of empathies listening from the parent's lack of support, in many of these children's problems which often would cause the child to give other forms of substitution, many of which were relating to some criminal tendencies such as petty theft, lack of interest in school studies, lack of modivation in general, a general feeling of not being loved and understood, which often was revealed to the counselor [only italics added].

A schematic presentation of the third sentence in (1) demonstrates the difficulty more dramatically.

The string of relative clauses in (1) have the form of subordinate constructions, yet they do not function

as grammatically subordinate structures, what scholarly grammarians call hypotactic constructions. Rather, their function seems one of parataxis, that is as coordinated clauses. Notice how readily and that or and those can substitute for which in many of the relative clauses above.[2]

It seems to me that the use of 'paratactic' relative clauses in (1) above is not an isolated example; consider the examples in (2) through (4), where again the paratactic nature of the relative clause (hypotactic in form alone) is revealed through substitution with a coordinator and a pronoun to serve the function of grammatical subject, such as and that.

(2) Writing is one of my hobbies, which helps me to relax. [... and that helps me to relax.]
(3) A mask may be front of some sort, to which true identity is hidden. [... and that hides true identity.] [I must rewrite the sentence in the active voice to allow for an agent subject that.]
(4) In high school my writing was worse because I could not write a well constructed sentence or a well constructed paragraph. Which made my essay unacceptable. In my free time, after I got out of high school, I would write a lot of sentences and paragraphs. This helped me to strengthen my writing. When I went to MATC, my english teacher helped me to strengthen my form of essay writing. Which I had thought I had improved in a lot. Now I think I can write an acceptable essay on almost any subject [Italics added]. [... And that made my essay unacceptable. .. And that I had thought I had improved in a lot.]

In addition to nonrestrictive relative clauses, a number of other 'subordinate' clauses also exhibit paratactic relationships to their 'main' clauses in the prose of college composition students, cf. (5) and (6).

(5) My teacher and I became such good friends, we call each other almost every week.
(6) My tooth hurt so bad, I was afraid it would have to be pulled.

Sentences (5) and (6) are ambiguous between hypotaxis (where an understood subordinator like that might introduce the second clause) and parataxis (where an understood coordinator like and might introduce the second clause).

Such ambiguous syntactic and semantic correspondences between hypotaxis and parataxis should not be completely unexpected, particularly in the prose of apprentice writers. In their A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language, Quirk et al. note the semantic identity of many nonrestrictive relative clauses and coordinated constructions, as in (7) or (8).

Third, many standardized test items probe the students' knowledge of stylistic options (and the

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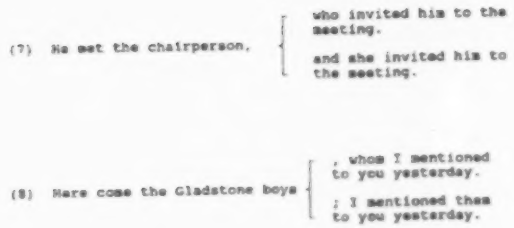

(7) He met the chairperson,
who invited him to the meeting.
and she invited him to the meeting.
(8) Here come the Gladstone boys
, whom I mentioned to you yesterday.
; I mentioned them to you yesterday.

pragmatic functions served by those options). Essentially, many items test the students' ability to revise for effective, appropriate use of the language. Consider, for example, (9) through (13), examples that 'mirror' TSWE and DTLS items. (To preserve the copyright and the integrity of the test, all of the test examples here are 'shadow' test items.)

(9) Upon the dedication of the chairman rests the
(A) (B) (C)
hopes for a satisfactory committee report.
(D)
No error.
(E)

(Example 9 employs word order inversion as a distractor in order to probe the students' knowledge of subject-verb agreement.)

(10) Having watched the movie, the refrigerator
(A)
provided us with a midnight snack,
(B)
a fattening spread, the calories of which we
(C) (D)
gleefully ignored. No error.
(E)

(Example 10 illustrates the "dangling" modifier construction.)

(11) A proposal by the steering committee was made to abolish the foreign language requirement.
A) A proposal by the steering committee was made
B) A steering committee proposal was made
C) It was proposed by the steering committee
D) The steering committee proposed
E) The steering committee proposal was

(Example 11 explores the students' understanding of the uses of active versus passive voice.)

(12) The restaurant has a friendly atmosphere, a clean kitchen, and its food is delicious.
A) its food is delicious.
B) delicious food.
C) food delicacies.
D) delights in good food.
E) contains delicious food.

(Example 12 tests the students' awareness of parallelism.)

(13) One course in composition was considered to be enough and that it would ensure my passing the entrance exam.
A) and that it would ensure my passing the entrance exam.
B) , and that it would ensure my passing the entrance exam.
C) , and that it would ensure me to pass the entrance exam.
D) that it would ensure me passing the entrance exam.
E) to ensure my passing the entrance exam.

(Example 13 uses poor coordination to focus on the students' ability to recognize effective subordination.)

Test items like (9) depend upon a student's recognizing and controlling word order inversion of a type common in formal, written English. Sentence (10) employs an appositive and a nonrestrictive relative clause as effective distractors from the 'real' modifier problem at the beginning of the sentence. Both the appositive and the nonrestrictive relative clause are stylistic options that developmental writers are struggling to control; hence the developmental writers, more than the stylistically fluent writers, may easily find themselves excessively distracted by the 'difficult' and 'problematic' stylistic choices used in sentences (9) and (10).

A correct response to item (11) depends upon the test-taker's understanding the uses of (and biases against) the passive voice. Passive constructions offer a whole bevy of stylistic choices that are often poorly understood or ignored by writing pedagogues themselves, cf. Kies (1985b). So it is not surprising that developmental writers (among others) find nothing objectionable in (11) as written.

Sentences (12) and (13) are particularly interesting in that they focus on the stylistic differences between para- and hypotactic constructions. Sentence (12), ostensibly an error in parallelism, seems completely acceptable if parataxis is the major pattern for clause linkage and if one wants to link two different, but related, topics -- what the restaurant is like and what its food is like. Similarly, the available answers for item (13), an example of 'awkward' coordination, would suggest that the hypotactic alternative (E) is superior to any paratactic version. Of course if parataxis is the primary strategy for linking clauses at this particular stage in a student's language development, then the student will be effectively distracted by issues of punctuation and pronoun case, trying to determine which paratactic revision is 'correct.'

Until now, we have looked at two paper-and-pencil tests. However, recently both ETS and ACT have developed computer adaptive placement tests, using the memory and programming power of computers to make accurate placement judgments in much shorter time. The two companies though use the computer very differently.

ETS' CPT asks the student to look at a series of 17 test items, putting one at a time on the screen. Many of the test items are a combination of those we looked at in (11) through (13), but the CPT also includes a new type of test item, an on-screen sentence and a prompt to rewrite mentally, as in (14) and (15).

The kind of revision that test items like (14) and (15) ask of students is just that kind of stylistic reformulation that lies at the heart of much of contemporary composition pedagogy. Such an approach to the teaching of composition goes back at least to Christensen (1965) and has been advocated more recently by de Beaugrande (1985) and Cohen (1990). Schultz (1994) even advocates stylistic reformulation as one of the preferred teaching strategies in foreign language instruction. Unfortunately, stylistic reformulation also demands of the writer the very kind of syntactic manipulation that eludes the developmental English student, as the research of Hunt (1970), Shaughnessy (1977), Freeman (1979), and Kies (1990) has demonstrated.

(14) Since the Hubble telescope has a distorted main mirror, NASA plans to repair the device during a future space shuttle mission.

Rewrite, beginning with

NASA's plans to repair the Hubble telescope during a future space shuttle mission ...

The next words will be

A) were distorted
B) by which they distorted
C) are necessary by a distortion
D) are the result of a distortion

(15) She believes that all politicians are corrupted by power and, as a consequence of that notion, she strongly endorses the movement for mandatory term limits.

Rewrite, beginning with

Mandatory term limits ...

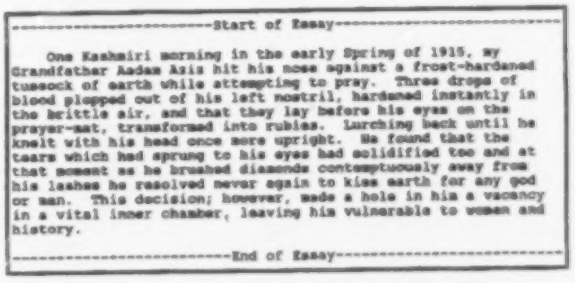
Your new sentence will include

A) they resulted from
B) the result was that
C) caused her to believe
D) because she believes

ACT's COMPASS Writing test puts an entire "essay" on the screen, as in (16). Students are asked to revise the essay. The students may move a pointer on the screen to any phrase or clause, press the Enter key, and then choose an alternative form from a window that appears near the phrase or clause the student highlights, as in (17) and (18).

(16) Below is a mock example of an ACT COMPASS Writing Test essay as it initially appears on the screen. (For the example, I have adapted the opening paragraph of Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children.)

Notice that the paragraph contains some overt usage problems, like the sentence fragment mid-way


----------Start of Essay----------

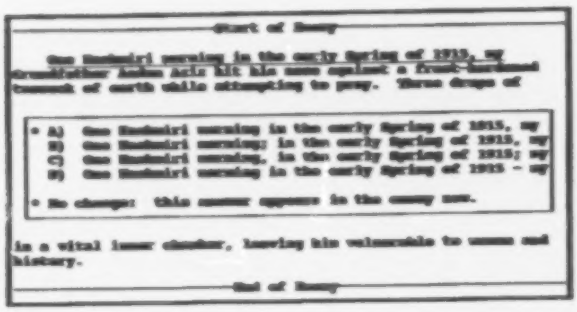
One Kashmiri morning in the early Spring of 1915, my Grandfather Aadam Aziz hit his nose against a frost-hardened tussock of earth while attempting to pray. Three drops of blood plopped out of his left nostril, hardened instantly in the brittle air, and that they lay before his eyes on the prayer-mat, transformed into rubies. Lurching back until he knelt with his head once more upright. He found that the tears which had sprung to his eyes had solidified too and at that moment as he brushed diamonds contemptuously away from his lashes he resolved never again to kiss earth for any god or man. This decision; however, made a hole in him a vacancy in a vital inner chamber, leaving him vulnerable to women and history.

----------End of Essay----------

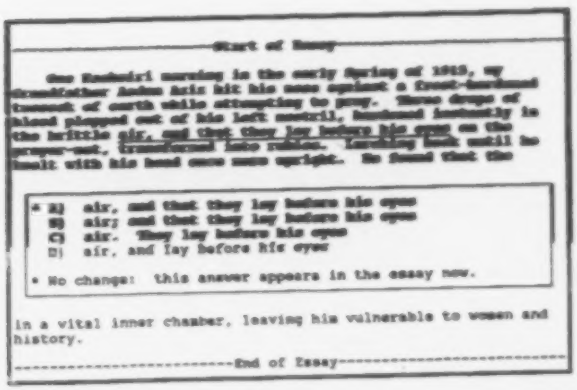
through or the punctuation error in the third to last line. However, the test allows the student to revise any line of the paragraph simply by moving an on-screen pointer and pressing Enter.

Such freedom of choice may place the developmental writer at a distinct disadvantage. Unfamiliar with the syntactic potential of the language, developmental writers are frequently distracted by unusual, though perfectly acceptable, syntactic constructions. Consequently, they often find themselves revising a tempting distractor, while missing many of the real usage problems in the test.

(17) Below is an example of how the ACT COMPASS Writing Test allows the student to edit the essay. If the student had moved the pointer to the first line and pressed Enter, s/he would then be presented with the following punctuation choices:


Start of Essay
A) One Hashmiri morning in the early Spring of 1915, my
B) One Hashmiri morning; in the early Spring of 1915, my
C) One Hashmiri morning, in the early Spring of 1915; my
D) One Hashmiri morning in the early Spring of 1915 - my
No change: this answer appears in the essay now.
in a vital inner chamber, leaving him vulnerable to women and
history.
End of Essay

(18) This is another example of how the ACT COMPASS Writing Test allows the student to edit the essay. Notice how the test allows students to correct this parallelism problem once they have pointed to it:


Start of Essay
A) air, and that they lay before his eyes
B) air; and that they lay before his eyes
C) air. They lay before his eyes
D) air, and lay before his eyes
No change: this answer appears in the essay now.
in a vital inner chamber, leaving him vulnerable to women and
history.
End of Essay

As diverse as the examples in (14) through (18) are, they all illustrate the computerized placement tests' emphasis on revision -- that portion of the writing process least under control by developmental writers.

3. Conclusions

After considering those three generalizations -- that developmental students master revision later, that they are stylistically naive, and that standardized tests probe the students' knowledge of stylistic options -- I concluded therefore that the discrepancies in the test results between the standardized tests and the writing samples resulted from a convergence of various factors of language development on the one hand and test design on the other. By the end of their composition instruction, the remedial writers developed some proficiency at invention and organization, while still learning to cope with revision, with issues of style and form -- issues that arise later in the writing process. Coupling that new proficiency with a limited but sufficient understanding of the conventions of the written language, the developmental writers were able to pass impromptu essay examinations. (After all, under time pressure, students are not expected to revise impromptu essays substantially.)

However, given a standardized test, those same developmental writers' scores improved insignificantly after their remedial instruction. It seems to me that standardized tests, by design, do not effectively evaluate a writer's capability with invention or organization, focusing instead on revision (the last stage of the writing process to be mastered by developing writers).

In this era of 'accountability' and 'outcomes assessment,' it is often crucial not only for English instructors but also for entire programs to be able to document (to 'measure') the 'growth' of developing writers for deans or boards of trustees or taxpayers. These results suggest that writing samples or portfolios are more appropriate than multiple choice tests as instruments to evaluate remedial writers at the college level, even though they are much less convenient for the institution.

Notes

[1]All of the examples in (1) through (6) are drawn from students' essays.

[2]See Kies (1990) for more discussion of the distinction between para- and hypotaxis in the prose of college composition students.

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Program

Friday, August 12, 1994

8:00 Registration (Coffee and Doughnuts)

8:30 **Opening Remarks**
Irene Brosnahan, Program Chair, Illinois State University; Ron Fortune, Chair, Department of English, Illinois State University

8:45 **The Writing Process AND Grammar -- Not EITHER-OR**
Martha Kolln, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania

9:15 **A Cognitively-Oriented Study on Writing: How Writers Speak About and Apply English Grammar During the Composing Process**
Linda Best, Kean College of New Jersey, Union, New Jersey

9:45 **Bridging the Great Grammar Chasm**
Denise M. Dennis, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina

10:15 BREAK

10:30 **Using Grammatical Information to Make Rhetorical Points**
Wanda Van Goor, Prince George's Community College, Largo, Maryland

11:00 **Grammar With a Purpose: Using Grammar to Teach Style to College Freshmen**
Paula Foster, California State University, Northridge, California, and Summer Smith, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania

11:30 **Punctuation and Grammar: Driving Forces in Composition**
Debra Laaker Burgauer, Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois

12:00 LUNCH

1:15 **KEYNOTE ADDRESS The Uneasy Partnership Between Grammar and Writing Instruction**
Robert Funk, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois

2:00 BREAK

2:15 **The Philosophical Roots of Traditional English Grammar**
Robert Einarsson, Great MacEwan Community College, Edmonton, Alberta

2:45 **After Jespersen: Nexus & Modification**
Ed Vavra, Pennsylvania College of Technology, Williamsport, Pennsylvania

3:15 **Contrasting Paradigms in the Teaching of Grammar**
Connie Weaver, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan

3:45 BREAK

4:00 **Instructor Attitudes Toward the Teaching of Grammar**
Claire Lamonica and Guangming Zou, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois

4:30 **Whose Judgments? A Survey of Faculty Responses to Common and Highly Irritating Writing Errors**
Peggy Kantz and Bob Yates, Central Missouri State University, Warrensburg, Missouri

5:00 **Handbooks and Variation in Agreement**
Terry Lynn Irons, Morehead State University, Morehead, Kentucky

5:30 DINNER

7:30 Business Meeting (Wine and Dessert Social)

Saturday, August 13, 1994

8:00 Coffee and Doughnuts

8:30 **Panel Discussion: Debating the Place of Grammar in the Composition Classroom**
Sally Joranko and Cindy Meyer Sabik, John Carroll University, Cleveland, Ohio; Neal Chandler and Donna Phillips, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio

9:30 **Unabashed Notes on the 'G-word': Grammar in the Classroom**
John Horlivy, University School of Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

10:00 **Language in Orbit: The Sentence/Discourse Connection**
Janet Gilbert, Delta College, University Center, Michigan

10:30 BREAK

10:45 **The Role of Grammar in the Teaching of Writing to ESL College Students**
Ru Zhang, Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois

11:15 **A Case for Grammar in a Multicultural College Writing Classroom**
Immaculate Kizza, University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, Tennessee

11:45 **Shifting Semantics of a Modal Auxiliary: *Would* as a Marker of Non-Habitual Past Tense**
Brenda McDaniel and Delma McLeod-Porter, McNeese State University, Lake Charles, Louisiana

12:15 LUNCH

1:30 **Improving Grammar and Other Writing Skills With Text Reconstruction (TR)**
Myra Linden, Joliet Junior College, Joliet, Illinois

2:00 **What Do They Know and When Do They Know It?**
Marilyn N. Silva, California State University, Hayward, California

2:30 **On Grammar, Writing Style and Writing Assessment: A Look at the Grammatical Choices Made Within Standardized and Computer Adaptive Testing**
Daniel Kies, College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, Illinois

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